

Christ in Isaiah

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] I shall read the greater part of the seventh chapter of the prophet Isaiah. Prophet Isaiah chapter 7. And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jopham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin, the king of Syria, and Pekah, the son of Ramaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. Then said the Lord unto Isaiah, go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou and Sha'ar Jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the [00:01:03] upper pool in the highway of the fullest field, and say unto him, take heed and be quiet. Fear not, neither be faint-hearted, for the two tales of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Ramaliah. Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Ramaliah, hath taken evil counsel against thee, saying, 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 Tebiel. Thus saith the Lord God, it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass, for the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin, and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, let it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Ramaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be [00:02:07] established. Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God. Ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David. Is it a small thing for you to weary men? But will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be [00:03:03] forsaken of both her kings. The Lord shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah, even the king of Assyria. Because I'm otherwise certain to forget at the end of the meeting, there's one thing that I'd like to say at this particular time for no better reason, and that is that if the brethren are agreeable, I propose, God willing, on Saturday to reverse the two subjects given, so that in the afternoon the subject would be the anointed one in chapters 61 and 63, and in [00:04:02] the evening the subject would be the servant of Jehovah, that's the second part, and the reason I would like to do this is that I cannot escape by any means from the strong desire that I have that we should end our series on Isaiah chapter 53 in the evening, and I feel that the distortion of the order will not be too serious to arrange the meetings on Saturday like this. So unless I have some very violent protest about a breach of faith, this is how I propose to arrange it on Saturday, God willing. On the afternoon of the third day after Jesus died, two of his disciples were [00:05:02] walking the seven miles, that's the distance from Newcastle to Ponteland, walking seven miles from Jerusalem to a village. There were no buses, and

it was unlikely that they could thumb a lift from a Roman chariot, but they were used to walking, and so they walked on. But this time, accustomed as they were to walking, their feet were lead and their hearts were stone. So disappointed were they at the fact that Jesus, in whom their hopes had been brought to center, had died. And we can see them as they walk along, with their faces lined with grief, and trudging along with their heads [00:06:03] close together, talking to each other. And they're so intent upon their talking to each other that they don't notice that a stranger has fallen in alongside them, and begins to walk with them, and soon enters the conversation, and says to them, what can you be talking about which makes you look so sad? And they said, we're talking about Jesus of Nazareth. He said, what about Jesus of Nazareth? What things are you talking about? And they suddenly stopped, and they looked at him and said, you must be the only person staying in Jerusalem at this feast time who doesn't understand the things that are happening there these days. There was Jesus the Nazarene, a prophet from God, [00:07:02] whose sermons and his miracles were of terrific power in the sight of God and man. And we'd come to believe that he was the one who would redeem Israel. But our rulers have delivered him up to Roman court, and he has been crucified. And we thought he had been the one who would redeem Israel. And they said, but just listen to the rest of the story. This morning, some of our women folk burst in and caused us to be greatly excited by telling us that they'd been to the tomb, and they found the body wasn't there. And then they'd seen angels who'd said to them that he was alive, but they didn't see him. So some of our men went to the tomb, and they found it just as they'd said, [00:08:01] but they didn't see Jesus. And so the stranger said to them, how slow you are to understand and believe. Those same scriptures which made you think that he was to be the deliverer of Israel, didn't you understand from those same scriptures that it must be, it had to be, that he was going to suffer and die? And while they were talking about this, he then began, at the book of Genesis, at the beginning of their ancient scriptures, and he began to go through the whole of those Old Testament books and explain to them in all the scriptures, all the things about himself, explaining how it was necessary that the Messiah should die, suffer death, and rise again from the dead the third day. And of course they arrived at the village, and he made that he was going to go forward. But they said to him, oh stay with us, it's evening now, and it'll soon be dark. And so [00:09:08] they persuaded him, and he went in. And they soon had a meal ready, and they sat down to it. But then they got another big surprise, because the stranger became the host. And he took the food, and he gave thanks for it, and gave it to them. And in that instant, they recognized that it was Jesus. And in the same instant, in front of their eyes, he vanished out of their sight. And they looked at each other and said, it's just dawning upon us, that while he was talking to us, our hearts changed. Instead of being like stone, they began to warm up. And they began to burn within us, while he was speaking to us, by the way. And they got up that same instant, and walked those seven miles back to Jerusalem. If anybody, um, wants to [00:10:07] know what is our object, in speaking of the passages that we are speaking about this week, then we are seeking for that experience of the burning heart. We're speak—seeking for that experience that our hearts will burn within us, as he speaks to us in all the scriptures of the things concerning himself. Would the Lord Jesus Christ speak to the mouth of the prophet Isaiah? He would indeed. And that's a very good reason why we should seek to find Christ in Isaiah. They arose, and they went back the seven miles to Jerusalem. Where did they get the energy from, at the end of that long, toilsome, sad road? It was the burning heart that gave them the energy. They knew the Lord in the midst, after having got to know him by the way. And in a very short time, their feet [00:11:06] were beautiful upon the mountains, spreading abroad over the world the gospel of peace, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, the crucified, and the risen Savior. And we would make no secret of the fact that what we are asking for the Lord this evening is the experience of the burning heart that provides the fuel for burning up the sadness that is upon so many of us, due to various kinds of disillusionment, that we also might know the Lord by the way. And in the midst, that our feet might become beautiful upon the mountains,

spreading aboard the glad tidings of peace.

An eminent prophet, I once heard say, that gives you to understand that it is a prophet of our own times, and not one of the Bible prophets. [00:12:05] An eminent prophet, I once heard say, that the objectives of true ministry are two, to open up the scriptures and to engage the hearts of the Lord's people with himself. And that brings true to me, to open up the scriptures and to engage the hearts of the Lord's people with himself.

Regarding the first, when as quite a young man, I first began to devote myself, not enough, but when I first began to devote myself to serious study of the scriptures, one of the first books that I tried, with the help of God, to delve into, as far as he would enable me to do so, was the prophet Isaiah. [00:13:02] And I found there a pasture of such exceeding richness in the things of God and of Christ, that it has left a mark on my heart that has never left me. And it is for this reason, amongst others, that I have taken the presumption of inviting you to read with me in the prophet Isaiah. With, I trust, real humility, I want to think of myself as a very inferior under-shepherd, under the rod and the staff of the chief shepherd himself, so that we may walk together through this rich pasture of the prophet Isaiah.

The second proposition that was made is that true ministry engages the heart with the Lord Jesus Christ. And truly, and surely, there is no portion of scripture which more stirringly and movingly and more with a greater charm presents to us the Lord Jesus Christ himself, [00:14:14] and the thing that has been called by the poet Isaiah's wild page, so that we might be led by this to do like Thomas did, to fall at his feet and say, my Lord and my God.

And it's a very interesting thing to see that the first clear reference to our Lord in the prophet Isaiah is the same name that has been written on the opening page of the New Testament, which is Immanuel, God with us, Immanuel, God with us.

That's interpreted in Matthew chapter 1 to be fulfilled in the birth of Jesus at Nazareth.

[00:15:07] Behold, a virgin shall conceive and shall bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Immanuel.

And this name says, that child that was to be born, it says, he is God, Immanuel.

It adds with us, but it says he is God. I love to dwell upon those instances, and they're quite numerous in the Gospels, where in an instant, with one flash of impression, so to speak, we get the impressions. There are the twin pillars of the temple of revelation, the absolute deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the story of this birth of the Virgin Mary, and the story of the name given, is like this. [00:16:02] There are certain marks which distinguish man as distinct from God, like, for example, weariness and sleep.

But there is not a more striking one than being conceived, and being born, and being nursed, and being fed as a baby thus entering in the world.

This was truly God. This was truly man.

This child was to grow up, to enter the world in a manner which betoken absolutely that he was perfectly a man. And yet, on the same instant, the name given said that he is God.

And we have there the absolute deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. You might say to me, does that mean that any person called Emmanuel must be God? [00:17:02] Is Emmanuel Shilmul God? No, indeed.

But in this case, the whole of scripture before and after demands the fullest possible meaning to this name given to this baby in Bethlehem, that his name was Emmanuel. He was, overall, God, blessed forever.

And we have these twin revelations to us. The fact that the name goes on is a separate, I think, and an additional thing that it is God with us. And whatever else we may learn as we seek to find Christ in the prophet Isaiah, you can take this and I can take this and we can make it our pillow tonight that God, the Almighty God, is with us. In spite of all the things that there are to disillusion us and to disturb us and to make us sad, we can lay our heads down upon our pillows tonight and every night [00:18:01] with the knowledge that springs out to us from this name given to the baby of Bethlehem, and that is that God is with us.

There hasn't only been a Hiroshima and a Belsen, a Bermuda and a Belfast, but there has been a Bethlehem.

And that Bethlehem assures us, the great event of Bethlehem assures us that God is with us. And we are entitled fully to reason, as the Apostle Paul does, from this event and all that sprang from it, if God before us, who can be against us?

And all the facts which make it possible for us to say this, if God before us, who can be against us? Notably, the cross and the resurrection. They're all here in the bud as we contemplate the child in the virgin's womb whose name was to be Emmanuel. And they justify us in saying, if God before us, who can be against us? [00:19:06] This is upon the opening page of the New Testament, and it's fitting, therefore, that upon the early parts of the prophet Isaiah, we should have this name brought before us as we have done. Now, I want to deal this evening with the first seven chapters of the prophet Isaiah.

And you'll agree with me that there's something of a problem here. I cannot assume that we're all familiar with the pages, and that there must be some means whereby we turn over these pages together, and we first of all do something to get a general idea what are the contents of these chapters, so that we may then pick out the salient points. Now, the first large section of the prophet Isaiah is, of course, chapters 1 to 39.

[00:20:05] Everyone who reads the book can see the sharp division at the end of chapter 39. It's a kind of a second volume of the book after that. It's dominated by an entirely different set of circumstances. But from chapter 1 to 39, there is one particular situation in its developing stages, which dominates the book, and in it, the power of God and the promise of his Christ is developed. Now, within that, the first major division is the first 12 chapters.

And I don't think there's anything more appealing to the heart than that 12th chapter, which brings this section to a close, when it says, Thou wast angry with me, but thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me.

I will trust and not be afraid, therefore we shall with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation. [00:21:09] Now, it seems to me necessary to divide that portion into two parts, and so I'm trying to

consider this evening the first seven chapters. And for a few minutes, if you would open your Bibles, at the beginning of the prophet Isaiah, we would look over what it has to say.

I won't read it. I'll hope that you are able to pick up the words as your eye stays upon the page, and you turn over the page as I go on, so that there will be coming to you a general idea of what the contents of the prophecy are before we come back to some details. Now, the first chapter stands clearly by itself, and it is a kind of preface or introduction.

First of all, it specifies a particular period, and that is in the days of Isaiah, [00:22:08] Jopham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

We shall have quite something to say, particularly about the reigns of Ahaz and Hezekiah, but there's no question at all about this portion of the book, and I presume that this refers to chapters 1 to 39. It fixes our attention upon the reigns of these four kings.

Then in verse 8, this preface fixes our eyes upon a particular situation, and that is that Jerusalem is left all by itself, and the rest of the cities of Judah are overrun by a foreign power.

Verse 7, strangers devour your land in your presence, it is desolate as overthrown by strangers, [00:23:02] and the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city. Now, that situation certainly did not arise until the story we have in chapters 36 and 37.

It's in these chapters that the story comes to that point, when the whole of Judah is overrun by a foreign invader, except the city of Jerusalem, which is left alone. Now we might say, why is it that such a thing has happened?

And the answer is given partly in verse 4, and that is that God's people have forsaken him.

They were worse than the ox and the ass who knew their master's crib. But in verse 4, they have forsaken the Lord, [00:24:02] they have provoked the Holy One of Israel, and to anger they are gone away backward. And in verse 23, we have an example of the kind of results, of a kind of actions in which their forsaking God have manifested themselves. Their princes are rebellious, and in the end they judge not the fatherless, neither does the cause of the widow come unto them. I don't know whether it strikes you how unchanging, in some ways, our God is, through all the progress of the revelation of himself that comes to us through Holy Scripture. Almost at the end of the book of God, it says, This is true religion, undefiled, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. These are actions in tune with the deep compassion of God, [00:25:03] that God missed from his earthly people, and in them they are a manifestation of their forsaking his will. God is still looking, but if his people are in tune with himself, they will have compassion on the underprivileged, and particularly on the people who are so described as the fatherless and widows again and again, both in this book and in other parts of the Word of God. They gave up judgment, and particularly the care of the fatherless and widows.

In verse 18, we read that the Lord wants to reason with them about this, and perhaps this is the clearest indication of what the book is all about. It is God reasoning with them about the reasons for which his heart is sad about them, and he wants them to hear his voice, and he wants to bring them back into the ways of peace. Because we read that although in verse 25 he has to turn his hand upon

them, [00:26:05] yet in verse 27 we read that Zion will be redeemed with judgment after all.

Now we shall find that the idea that he's turned his hand upon them to be a dominating idea in the rest of the prophet.

Now chapter 2 to chapter 4 has some very precise indications.

It seems to be a kind of second introduction, and it assures them that Zion and Jerusalem will be at the head of the nations in the end.

Because although in chapters 1 to 39, Jerusalem is protected by the Lord from the foreign invader, it's a little later in the book, it does come. And in chapter 65, it says, Our holy and beautiful city is burned with fire and strangers devour it in our presence. [00:27:07] So you only have to go further and you find that this city is overrun and destroyed. But God assures us in chapter 2, for example verse 2, It shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established from the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills. Now this description, and it's a very lovely one, if we had time we shall come back to it, ends with the words, Neither shall they learn war any more, in verse 4.

But it goes on to say that the land at the present time is full of things that are distressing to the Lord.

Verse 7, the land is full of silver and gold. Verse 8, the land is full of idols and they worship the work of their own hands. [00:28:03] And because of this in verse 12, the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lifted up. And through the rest of this passage, again and again, we read, in that day.

Verse 17, the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. Verse 20, in that day a man shall cast his idols of silver and his idols of gold to the moles and to the bats and so on. Verse 7 of chapter 3, in that day.

And so this is a description of the final blessing of God's beautiful city Zion.

But in the meantime, God's judgment must be upon them.

Now in chapter 5, particularly in verses 1 to 7, we have a song that the prophet sings about his beloved or his friend.

[00:29:05] And that gives in greater detail the reason why the hand of God is turned against his people. It describes the fact that he did all he could with Israel to bring forth fruit. But he found, when he came to it, he found wild grapes.

It says that he came and looked for fruit.

In verse 4, wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes. And because it brought forth wild grapes, God has broken down the fence and God has had to punish, to chastise his people.

And from verse 8, almost to the end, down to verse 25, we have various woes in which the Lord is

explaining to his people wherein they have grieved him.

[00:30:06] And in the end, he says in verse 25, therefore is the Lord, the anger of the Lord kindled against his people. He has stretched forth his hand against them and has smitten them, and the hills did tremble, and so on. At the end of that verse, for all this, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. Now don't forget this, because it forms a refrain, which we'll come to much later. Again and again and again it's repeated, but the anger of the Lord, in spite of all the chastisements that have come upon them, the anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. And in verse 26, he says that he will carry out his chastisement, because they have so displeased him by hissing from a distant nation to come and overrun his land. Now this is the very bottom, so to speak, of the hill. This is the very lowest point, when God has sought to find fruit from his people, and he has found none. [00:31:04] He has found wild grapes, and therefore his anger is turned against them. And when we get to the lowest point, then God begins by intervening himself. How does he intervene? He intervenes by bringing one man into his presence, and there, by conviction, confession, cleansing, and commissioning him, the Lord begins to recover again his people to himself.

This is the story of what happened to Isaiah when he found himself in the presence of God. And although he is apt to pronounce woes against the people, he has to say in verse 5, in the presence of God, woe is me, for I am undone. And yet it says in verse 8, the Lord says, whom shall I send and who will go for us?

And Isaiah said, here am I, send me. [00:32:02] And he became Shiloh, he became Siloam, he became a sent one, with the lovely accents of the grace of God, who was to recover his people from their error, and to recover them to the ways of peace. And then, in chapter 7, we find that there's another intervention.

There may be some, there certainly was a fairly considerable lapse of time between the two, but we find another intervention when God sends Isaiah to meet the king Ahaz. And when he finds that Ahaz is set upon not responding to God's overtures, then he gives him, on the one hand, a sign that Jerusalem will be delivered, and these people will be overcome, but God will bring upon him the one who will chastise him. [00:33:02] From other passages we find that Ahaz had in fact already, probably already, invited the king of Assyria to come and help him. And it is in verse 17 of our chapter that we get an extremely dramatic situation.

While all the time Isaiah has been asking Ahaz to ask for a sign, Ahaz is saying in his heart, presumably hoping that Isaiah won't know, my hope is in the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria is my hope. I refuse to commit myself to hope in the Lord. The king of Assyria is my hope. And when after he had been assured of the intervention of God for their immediate deliverance, as far as he himself is concerned, in verse 17, the Lord shall bring upon thee and upon thy people, upon thy father's house, days that have not come from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah, even, would he pause, even the king of Assyria, the very person that Ahaz in his heart of hearts has been reliant upon, because he was refusing to commit himself to trust in the Lord. [00:34:19] Now it'll be necessary for me to explain a little about the background to these events.

I would like to remind you that when the Lord Jesus Christ was speaking to Jewish disciples in Luke chapter 24, he was speaking to people who were absolutely soaked in the Old Testament history. And they knew what was the background to these events. I'm told that in the synagogues of the Jews, in the parts of the world where they're less restrained than they are in England, at the present

time, when they read the book of Esther at the Feast of Purim, the whole congregation boos and shouts at the name of the man who tried to betray them. [00:35:12] Whenever the word Haman is mentioned, they all boo and shout at the idea. They're well aware of the Old Testament story and who were the enemies of God. But we have to have it explained to us, and we have to have it reminded. Now in the world wherein these things happened, the dominant factors were the two superpowers of Egypt in the south and of Assyria away in the far northwest.

Egypt is quite well known since the Exodus.

They've been fairly peaceful and non-aggressive, although we do hear of them from time to time. But Assyria is a very different proposition. [00:36:01] It's an interesting thing to see that for many, many generations of English people and others, knowing their Bibles and knowing something about the king of Assyria from them, the rest of profane history was an absolute blank to these people until the middle of the last century when their palaces and their cities were opened up by the excavators. And in most cases where they did cover the same grounds, their inscriptions on the walls of their palaces related to the same things, the same events, the same people, the same names of the Jewish kings, as are told us in our Bibles. And although Assyria is far away to the northeast, it was in fact the higher part of the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates, called Mesopotamia later. The higher part towards the sources of the rivers was Assyria, and the lower part down to the sea was called Babylonia. [00:37:07] But of recent years, this great power Assyria has been stirring. King Uzziah died in 740 BC, and about 120 years before that, an Assyrian campaign appears in the inscriptions which began a sustained pressure against the west, and this was bound in the end to bring Assyria into conflict with Israel and Judah. The first Assyrian king to be mentioned in the Bible is called by two names, Paul and Tiglath-Pileser, and he first appears in 2 Kings chapter 15 and 19. But after that, chapters 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 of 2 Kings, then they're full of the king of Assyria.

[00:38:01] They're as full of the king of Assyria as the prophet Isaiah is, and page after page and page after page of Isaiah, the king of Assyria, occupies the greatest possible name. During the period that followed the death of Uzziah, and to the death of Sennacherib, of which we read in chapter 37, of course the Assyrian kings changed. Shalmaneser there was, and then Sargon, and then Sennacherib after Tiglath-Pileser died. And they had sacked many famous cities, including Babylon. And the great trouble was, of course, that if these two great powers, Assyria and Egypt, came to blows with each other, then they must reach each other by way of that narrow coastal strip which contained Judah and Israel.

Now, a sidelight, of course, upon these considerations, which, while not entirely found in the scriptures, [00:39:02] is absolutely at one with some, is the terrifying ferocity of the Assyrian army.

In the Bible we read that they depopulated whole countries completely. And it was as part of their stated policy. The Rabshaker sent by Sennacherib said, Just you stay at peace until my lord and master sends and carries you away to a wonderful land that will be your own. They depopulated whole countries as part of their policy of conquest.

But the inscriptions which reveal what would be known of them in the ancient world tell an additional story. I've myself seen in the British Museum and in pictures, pictures of the Assyrian army with their captives on the floor and their spears and having their foot upon the prisoner and simply poking out his eyes with the spears like this and going from man to man with their spears, putting their eyes out one by one. [00:40:04] There was never until our own days such horrible ferocity as was shown by the

Assyrian armies. And we can see what a terrifying prospect it was that they should have had the shadow of the king of Assyria over them all the time. Now it was in 734 BC, we read about it in 2 Kings chapter 16 verses 5 and 6. We read that Syria and Ephraim, that is the two little states immediately to the north of Judah, they formed a treaty, a confederacy in order to attack Judah. You know of course that Judah and Israel or Ephraim were once a united kingdom. But under Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, they broke away from each other and they were often at enmity with each other. And here Ephraim was confederate with Syria in order to attack Judah and Ahaz.

[00:41:06] And we read in 2 Kings what we don't read in Isaiah, that Ahaz had actually called for help to the king of Assyria. So far as size is concerned, it was something like Luxembourg calling in Russia to protect them against a combination of Holland and Belgium. Something very like that it was.

And behind this story that we've read is the fact that Ahaz, who was of the house of David and was one of the line of David to whom the promises of God had been made, he had utterly refused to trust in the Lord. He had brought heathen idols found with the king of Assyria into the temple of the Lord. And refusing to commit himself to trust in the Lord, which Isaiah gave for his message day by day, he had actually called in the king of Assyria. And the chastisement that was to come was described like the waters of the river.

[00:42:10] We'll come to this in chapter 8. The Lord will bring upon you the waters of the river strong and mighty, the king of Assyria. And in chapter 28, like an overflowing scourge, the king of Assyria would come down upon them. This was what God was speaking about. Now Egypt, all this time, appears shadowily in the background as a possible ally, especially in the later parts of this part of Assyria, appears as a possible ally of Judah against the Assyrians.

They brought in the Assyrians as an ally against Ephraim of Syria, and then they were constrained to call in Egypt as an ally. Now I'm going to turn aside at this point and ask you if you remember, [00:43:01] because the two things are very closely interrelated, and one of them will cast light upon the other, and that is that in what we read about the last days, the end of the age, in Daniel chapter 11, we find at the end of the age that Israel would be attacked by the king of the north, or Assyria, in its part Syria.

And the king of the north would sweep through them with a terrific invasion right down to the south against Egypt. Secondly, we learn that Judah, the Jews, would be relying in that day upon a treaty with a foreign power to protect them. And we also learn that although the mass of the people were committed to this alliance and refused to trust themselves to the Lord, [00:44:01] there were a small number who had committed themselves to the Lord and who were trusting in him. And we shall find a great deal of light both cast upon the rest of prophecy about the end of the age and also upon the meaning of the book of Isaiah by the very obvious connection between Israel, Judah, attacked from the north by a terrific invasion and concerned also with the south and Egypt and whether they should rely upon another power, Egypt, to help them. In the later part, in chapter 10, in fact, of Isaiah, it says, When the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion, I will punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria. Has the Lord yet performed his whole work upon Mount Zion? No, he hasn't.

Therefore, when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion, [00:45:02] when the whole story is told, then the Lord will punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria. That means that the king of Assyria is an important element in the set up of the revolt against God of the last days. And this is another reason why these matters are of such interest to us. William Kelly has said that the Assyrian

affects the same objects and in the same places as the king of the north. And he finds it always, therefore, perfectly acceptable and helpful to identify the two together. The Assyrian in the last days, who appears so plainly in this book, is the same personage in the same lands as the king of the north or the prophet Isaiah. And they will all be dealt with by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ when he comes again.

[00:46:01] Now, I must pass over the earlier passages about which I might have spoken a little and come in this chapter 7 that we read back just for a few minutes to it. If we look down the verses, we find that we have a reference to the fact that for which I refer to 2 Kings chapter 16 that Israel and Syria were confederate against Judah.

Now, I want you to think of this passage as we go down it under the first 17 verses as it stands.

Without bringing in the light cast by the New Testament, without bringing in the distant future at all, but we'll see how it's an epic of faith on the part of Isaiah against the most terrific odds which in the end are completely vindicated [00:47:01] and they encourage us in the presence of whatever may be the difficulties that come upon us to put our trust in the Lord and his word and in the meantime to possess our souls in peace and in patience. We shall find that this is a lesson, a wonderful lesson even if the other more important meanings were not available to us. There was this confederacy in the first verse and someone told Ahaz, the house of David, that they were actually coming. It says, the heart of his people was moved as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind. That's a very wonderful picture.

If you look down from a distant place upon a wood you can see the wind sweeping over it and every tree bows its head as the wind passes by. The trees of the wood are moved by the wind. So were the hearts of Ahaz and his people with terror at the idea [00:48:01] that these kings were confederate against them. Then the Lord, who has in the previous chapter identified and cleansed and commissioned his servant if you want to be the means of revival in the things of God then it's Isaiah 6 you must take your beginning to find yourself in the presence of the Lord confessing your sin and then being cleansed and commissioned by him to be in the way that we can be his sent one and then immediately the Lord has a work for Isaiah to do. He says to Isaiah, go forth now to meet Ahaz. Thou and Sha'ar Jashub thy son.

Now that name, the names of Isaiah's children are very important as it tells us in Hebrews 2 quoting from these chapters. It says, I and the children that God has given me. Mershal al-Hashbaz in the next chapter and Sha'ar Jashub are very important names. [00:49:02] And this one means a remnant shall return. It's almost the root of all that we read in Holy Scripture but the remnant of the Jews who shall return. God sends him to meet Ahaz at the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fullest field. This turns out to be exactly the same place that Rapshaker came and took his stand in chapter 36. Those who saw both events would certainly connect them together. And Isaiah said to him, take care, be careful, and be quiet.

For he said, their confederate against you and their settlers go up against Judah. But in verse 7 Isaiah continues, thus saith the Lord God, it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. And looking perhaps at the incredulity he sees in the face of Ahaz, but if you don't believe, if you don't have faith, then you shall not be established. [00:50:02] And so because of this reluctance of Ahaz the Lord, presumably by Isaiah, in verse 10 and 11 offers a sign. Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God. There was no limit in its height or its depth, in heaven or on earth. He could ask a sign of the Lord his God.

And Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. In other words, he will not commit himself to faith in God.

And so Isaiah says, behold, a virgin shall conceive and shall bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel. And in verse 16, before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhor'st shall be forsaken of both her kings.

Now that before makes it absolutely inescapable that there was to be a birth there and then, which was to be the sign. That child was to be the sign to Ahaz. [00:51:03] Before that child would know to refuse the evil and choose the good, then Syria and Ephraim would be forsaken and abandoned.

But the very one upon whom you have trusted, God will bring him against you.

But just as certain as in this passage taken alone, the child and the son to be born were a sign there at that moment, by which they could be certain that the Lord would deliver Judah and Jerusalem. So we are assured in the 23rd verse of Matthew chapter 1, so very well known to us, that Joseph is informed that the child promised to him was promised in fulfillment of these very words that we know so well, a virgin shall conceive and shall bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel. [00:52:06] Now, just in closing, it's a very important thing that at the very forefront of the whole New Testament story and uniquely amongst Old Testament prophecies, in the forefront so far as the prophet Isaiah is concerned, we have this emphasis upon the promise of the miraculous birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I'm sure that many Christians at times and young Christians very frequently ask themselves why it is so important that we should believe in the miraculous birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. I've said already that what I've called the twin pillars in the Temple of Revelation are here, the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and his perfect manhood. [00:53:01] But what introduces them, what brings them in, what makes such a truth possible is the miraculous birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, a virgin shall conceive and shall bear a son and thou shalt call his name Emmanuel. If we were to think of other Old Testament prophecies, then the coming savior must be of the woman's seed, Genesis chapter 3.

The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head and it shall bruise his heel.

The seed of the woman must be the coming deliverer or messiah.

The person born must be the son of God.

It must be an incarnation of the eternal God himself. About this very event, a contemporary prophet Micah says [00:54:02] about Bethlehem Ephrata, out of thee shall he come forth unto me whose goings forth are from everlasting. He must be God.

He must be the son of God.

And also we understand from the types of the Passover and from the types of so many sacrifices in the Old Testament story that the savior must be without taint of sin. There's only one way in which requirements like these could be met. It must be by that miraculous birth of the Lord Jesus Christ which permitted him to be the seed of the woman. The virgin Mary was his mother.

But he must also be the son of God. Even Mary couldn't understand this but in the wonderful words of the angel to her, the Holy Ghost, the power of the highest [00:55:02] shall overshadow thee. Therefore

that holy thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the son of God.

God was the originator of that life and only thus could the one who was born and bore the name Jesus the savior and Emmanuel God with us only thus could he truly be the son of God. And also if he was to be a sinless savior and yet a man in every real sense of the term then this could only be brought about by his miraculous birth of the virgin. Well might we say all the depths, using the words that the apostle Paul used in another connection but they're very fitting in this connection all the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God how unsearchable is his wisdom [00:56:02] and his ways past finding out to him glory and majesty forever and ever.

Well for us the one who actually bore the name of Jesus when he was here amongst men his name is Emmanuel and we indeed pray that as we reflect upon the wonder of his miraculous birth which contained the bud of all that afterwards should come that he became in his life the son of God and in his death a sinless sacrifice all to be developed on these pages of Isaiah then we desire as I've said already we desire that at the word coming to us from the page of holy scripture about himself that our hearts should be caused both now and afterwards to burn within us and that that burning heart [00:57:03] may lead to the kind of action which is glorifying to the name of him who is called Emmanuel, God with us.