

Isaiah 7-12

Who Will You Trust?

→ Isaiah 7:1-17¹

--Isaiah 7:1-2—The Setting

--^{Isa 7:1} When Ahaz son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, was king of Judah, King Rezin of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem, but they could not overpower it.

^{7:2} Now the house of David was told, "Aram has allied itself with Ephraim"; so the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind.

--This appears to be a double editorial introduction, both giving the historical setting for this event and prophecy, namely the Syro-Ephraimite War in 735-734.

--Ahaz and his people were filled with fear, and rightly so, since two of their regional enemies were allied against them. In fact, both Israel and Aram were probably superior to Judah militarily alone, much less together. This naturally brought a great deal of fear. This is the background of Isaiah's word to Ahaz.

--Isaiah 7:3-17—Immanuel

--Isaiah 7:3-6

--^{Isa 7:3} Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out, you and your son Shear-Jashub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman's Field. ⁴ Say to him, 'Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid. Do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood--because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah. ⁵ Aram, Ephraim and Remaliah's son have plotted your ruin, saying, ⁶ "Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves, and make the son of Tabeel king over it."

--Shear-Jashub (שֵׁאֵר יָשׁוּב)

--Prophetic children's names are used not only here, but also in Isaiah 8 and in Hosea. In a sense, this made the prophet and his family a walking message, word, or vision.

--Literally the name means "a remnant will return." The name is especially important when seen in the canonical context of Isaiah 7-12. In fact, the name appears as a simple grammatical form in 10:21.

--Thus the name has a double meaning—there will be judgment, but a remnant will return. As Isaiah pointed out in 1:9 & 6:13, God would leave some survivors or a root of hope. Otherwise they would become like Sodom.

--Note Romans 9:27-29, where Paul quotes Isaiah 10:22-23 & 1:9 with reference to the salvation of a remnant. There I believe that he equates that remnant to those who are saved through Jesus Christ.

--Ahaz

--The reader should note that Isaiah had access to the king of Judah. This would suggest that either Isaiah may have had some type of official role in the court, i.e.

¹ For extensive bibliographies on various issues regarding this passage, see John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1985), 85-103. The bibliography is 15 years old, but it is quite extensive.

a prophetic advisor to the king. This would be the norm for kings of the ANE, even evil kings such as Ahab in Israel in the 9th century BC (see 1 Kings 22).

--Upper Pool, Washerman's Field

--The Upper pool was probably at the north end of the City of David below the Gihon Spring, although exact identification is impossible. The end of the conduit was probably at the south end of the aqueduct that flowed from the Upper pool into the original Pool of Siloam, just inside the wall of the City of David.

--The Washerman's, or Fuller's, Field was the place where professional (& other?) laundry workers went to work. There was a spring (En Rogel) near the junction of the Kidron and Hinnom Valley, where this apparently took place.²

--Ahaz most likely was here to inspect the water system in light of the impending attack by Rezin and Pekah. This was a normal activity, as one can see in the later activities of Ahaz's son, Hezekiah. He was inspecting the safety of Jerusalem's water supply. Hezekiah would later find the system lacking and build a new water tunnel through the hillside into the City of David.

--"Two smoldering stubs of firewood"

--Isaiah already points out the true nature of Rezin and Pekah. They are nothing but "smoldering stubs of firewood." They were already burned up. This paints a picture of the actual weakness of these two kings, at least in comparison to God. Isaiah, and the Lord, was calling upon Ahaz to recognize the weakness of the foreign kings relative to the almighty power of their God. This was, unfortunately, not a reality that Ahaz could grasp.

--"Remaliah's Son"

--Pekah was not the legitimate heir to the throne of Israel; rather he had usurped the throne. Thus the prophet does not use his name, but uses his father's name. This emphasizes Pekah's illegitimate nature. He did not deserve to be the king.

--**Isaiah 7:7-9**

-- *Isa 7:7* Yet this is what the Sovereign LORD says:

"It will not take place, it will not happen,

Isa 7:8 for the head of Aram is Damascus,

and the head of Damascus is only Rezin.

Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people.

Isa 7:9 The head of Ephraim is Samaria,

and the head of Samaria is only Remaliah's son.

If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.' "

--The Lord's Promise

--"It will not happen." This is a simple promise in very simple terms. The threat may be real, but the threat will never come to fruition. The two kings' desire to besiege and defeat Jerusalem will not happen. Jerusalem will survive.

--[This and the events during the days of Hezekiah added strength to the theology of the inviolability of Jerusalem. The Lord showed several times that

² See *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s. v. "Fuller's Field."

designs against Jerusalem would come to naught.] And why was this design against Jerusalem futile?

--He is the "head"! The heads of the opposing were mere men, Pekah and Rezin. These mere men would not decide the fate of Judah and Jerusalem. Only the Lord, the head of Judah would make that determination. And while Isaiah made many prophecies concerning the coming devastation of Judah and Jerusalem, it was not yet time and therefore would not happen!

--Who will you trust?

--The final couplet is a play on words using two forms (one Hifil and one Nifal) of the same Hebrew verb (*'aman* אָמַן). The NIV captures some of this word play by using the verbs "stand firm in your faith" and "stand." In Hebrew the wordplay is especially stark, pointing out the necessity that Ahaz place his trust in the Lord, not in anything else. This is the question that sums up Isaiah 7: Who will you trust?

--Unless Ahaz and the people of Judah believe in the Lord and trust him completely to deliver them, they will not stand. Thus the covenant between Judah and God will be broken unless they trust Him completely. This is a much more radical view of faith than is usually presented in the prophets. They are called to wait for the deliverance of God rather than to call for help from Assyria.

--Otto Kaiser called this passage the "hour of faith."³ Ahaz chose the way of political expediency rather than the path of faith. The road always looks more difficult than that of human work and alliances because it is unseen. Ahaz learned, as we often do, however, that the way of the faith was the only way of survival. Any way other than faith and trust in God ends in hopelessness and defeat.

--Isaiah 7:10-17

--Isa 7:10 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹ "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."

^{Isa 7:12} But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test."

^{Isa 7:13} Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right. ¹⁶ But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste. ¹⁷ The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah--he will bring the king of Assyria."

--"A sign"

--A sign served to confirm the truth of a prophetic word or promise. The Hebrews were shown that God had sent Moses because of the miracles & plagues. The people knew God had led them out of Egypt because he led them across the Red Sea. Eli was shown the truth that his priestly line would end by the sign of the death of his two sons on the same day. Ahab and Israel received a sign (his mortal wound in battle) to confirm the word of Micaiah ben-Imlah.

³ Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary*, Old Testament Library, Trans. by John Bowden (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 134-148.

--Ahab sounds pious in refusing to “put the Lord to the test,” but he is actually answering the question asked earlier, “Who will you trust?” But Isaiah’s response suggests that Ahaz’s answer was actually a “wearisome hypocrisy arising out of unbelief.”⁴

--“Try the Patience of God”

--Not only is Isaiah impatient with Ahaz, even God is impatient with him. Note that here Isaiah says “my God,” perhaps suggesting that the Lord was no longer Ahaz’s God because of his rejection of God’s word.

--It has been suggested that this is the turning point for the house of David. With this rejection of Isaiah’s word, God has rejected the Davidic line and now promises a messianic hope for the future.⁵

--“Virgin”

--The birth of “Immanuel” to the “virgin” or “young woman” is the sign. The identity of the child and the meaning of the sign will be discussed below.

--Is this a prophecy of virgin birth?

--No, there is nothing in this text to suggest a virgin birth. The theology of virgin birth is based upon the use of this text by Matthew (1:23). [This is not to deny the truth of the virgin birth of Jesus, but to say that Isaiah 7:14 does not prophecy a virgin birth.]

--The Hebrew term used here (*almah* עַלְמָה) does not actually mean “virgin.” It technically refers to a young woman who has reached maturity, i.e. of marriageable age. As Childs points out, since the text does not use “woman,” the virginity of the young woman, or maiden, may well be expected. But this still does not in any way suggest a birth without sexual relations. The sign is not to whom the child would be born, but the fact of his birth and his identity as “Immanuel.”

--The identity of the woman has concerned many, with the two most common suggestions Isaiah’s wife, who is mentioned in the next chapter as the mother of a new son, or Ahaz’s wife. Either of these would make sense, but the identity of the woman and the child is not the point. The point of the sign is the name and the message.

--“Immanuel”

--“God with us” is the promise of the sign. Ahaz refused to trust in God, turning instead to his own political prowess and foreign aid. The simple fact that God was with Judah is the central facet of the sign, not the identity of the woman, or perhaps even of the child.

--Ahaz ruled Judah as if God was absent, or at least irrelevant. Isaiah was trying to remind Ahaz that the covenant between Israel/Judah and the Lord guaranteed the presence and power of God with his people. If Ahaz ruled in the light of

⁴ Brevard Childs, *Isaiah*, Old Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 65.

⁵ John Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1-39*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 206.

God's powerful presence (as the "Lord of Hosts" and "Holy One of Israel"), he would have no reason to fear Aram or Israel.

--The Point of the Sign

--"Curds and honey"

--"Curds and honey" can have a *double entendre* (double meaning).

--On the one hand, it refers to a land of desolation when only wild or natural food is available. Thus no grain, bread, or vegetables is mentioned.

--On the other hand, "milk and honey" represents the abundance of the land, even proverbially as in the Book of Joshua. Thus the "curds and honey" may well represent both the coming desolation and the protection of Immanuel.

--"Two kings . . . laid waste"

--The true point of the Immanuel sign is that two kings, Rezin and Pekah, will be gone before the child is old enough to know right from wrong. Whether this is the age of maturity (12 or so) or toddler age when a child begins to understand right and wrong is irrelevant. The point is that God is with them and will protect them from these two kings.

--The Further Interpretation of the Sign

--Isaiah 8

--In chapter 8, Isaiah makes Immanuel the owner of the land and the God who is with us. This would seem to be a certain messianic image, as both Childs and Oswalt argue.

--Matthew 1:23

--Matthew is quoting the Septuagint, which uses the word for "virgin." Thus, the messianic prophecy of Immanuel becomes a prophecy of the virgin birth. So does this make Isaiah 7:14 a prophecy of the virgin birth? Perhaps the answer is "yes" and "no." It is not technically a prophecy of the virgin birth, but by prophesying of the birth of the messianic Immanuel, it prophesies of the virgin birth by default.

--Note that Matthew also defines the term. Thus, he wanted not only to focus upon the virgin birth but also upon the point of the sign, namely that Jesus was "God with us." Jesus was God taking human form and coming into the world. This was certainly a different messianic vision than most people of Jesus' days could have envisioned.

--"King of Assyria"

--Here at last the identity of the true source of judgment is identified. The message is that Ahaz need not fear Israel or Aram, but he better fear the king of Assyria. Ahaz's intended source of help will eventually be the source of judgment. The king of Assyria will bring trouble that has been unknown since the division of the kingdom, which was a time of great upheaval and near civil war.

--Implicitly Isaiah is stating the truth concerning who is in control. God will choose the source of judgment, and no one else has that ability.

→ Isaiah 8:1-22

--8:1-4

^{Isa 8:1} The LORD said to me, "Take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary pen: Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. ²And I will call in Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberekiah as reliable witnesses for me." ³Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said to me, "Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. ⁴Before the boy knows how to say 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria."

--"Large scroll" (actually "tablet" rather than scroll, see NASB, RSV, NRSV)

--This could be functioning as a legal document, perhaps like the purchase of the field in Jeremiah 32 functioned to show that prophet's faith that the Lord would deliver some from the coming judgment. But this interpretation seems to be forced on the text.

--Instead, the public nature of the document seems to be the emphasis. Isaiah was to write the name of the coming child on an easily read (thus "an ordinary pen," lit "stylus of a man") public pronouncement. This was a public message that everyone needed to see.

--Uriah the priest is known from 2 Kings 16:10ff, where he is given the job of setting up an Assyrian altar in the temple area of Jerusalem. Ahaz gives him these directions after meeting with Tiglath-Pileser in Damascus, after the latter has defeated Judah's enemies. Thus he is in company with Ahaz in his rebellion against God.

--Oswalt argues that this is intentionally including Uriah with Ahaz. God will not let them off easily, so to speak. Their rebellion will be on public display. And the fact that God has spoken against them through Isaiah will be public knowledge.

--"Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz"

--The name means "Speeding (to the) plunder, hastening (to the) spoil." The point is that judgment is rapidly approaching. It is imminent. Remember that this is actually a judgment against Samaria & Damascus. It only becomes a judgment oracle against Judah because they refuse to hear the prophet and trust the Lord.

--After making the pronouncement of the name, Isaiah begins the process of having a son (i.e. "prophetess" is presumably his wife, some even argue that she is the *almah* or 7:14, a fair possibility). Thus the sign takes a significant amount of time to be revealed and confirmed.

--The point is, of course, that by the time the child can say "mama" and "daddy" Israel and Aram will be removed as threats. As in the Immanuel passage in Isaiah 7, the point is that they need to trust God to deal with this threat, but they refuse to listen to Isaiah, instead trusting in Tiglath-Pileser. [In application, believers today, especially leaders, must be careful to listen to Isaiah rather than to Tiglath-Pileser!]

--8:5-8

Isa 8:5 The LORD spoke to me again:

⁶ "Because this people has rejected the gently flowing waters of Shiloah and rejoices over Rezin and the son of Remaliah,

⁷ therefore the Lord is about to bring against them the mighty floodwaters of the River-- the king of Assyria with all his pomp.

It will overflow all its channels, run over all its banks

⁸ and sweep on into Judah, swirling over it, passing through it and reaching up to the neck.

Its outspread wings will cover the breadth of your land,

O Immanuel!"

--Here the initial meaning of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz as a prophecy against Israel and Aram is expanded to Judah. Assyria, who will be the means of judgment against these two enemies will also be a means of judgment against Judah.

--God is pictured as the "waters of Shiloah," probably a reference to the waters gently flowing from the Gihon Spring to the Siloam Pool to bring the necessary sustenance to Jerusalem. But Judah had chosen to look for better sources of refreshment and provision. But they would soon learn of their drastic miscalculation.

--The waters of Assyria will flood Judah and nearly drown them ("to the neck") before receding. This word of judgment would be further sign of God's control and the meaning of Immanuel. He would allow the judgment of Judah, but not its complete destruction—at least not yet.

--Immanuel is mentioned here, apparently as the owner of the land (See below).

--8:9-10

Isa 8:9 Raise the war cry, you nations, and be shattered!

Listen, all you distant lands.

Prepare for battle, and be shattered! Prepare for battle, and be shattered!

¹⁰ Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted;

propose your plan, but it will not stand,

for **God is with us.**

--Because God is with His people they have no reason to fear. He will protect them from outside attack, no matter how fierce. Even the Assyrian army is no match for God.

--This is a promise that Jerusalem and Judah will cling to for several generations, but they will ultimately find that the promise without faith in the one making the promise and faithfulness to his covenant is meaningless.

--Conclusions on the Immanuel Prophecy

--Immanuel as immediate prophecy

--Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz appears to be an initial representation of the fulfillment of the Immanuel prophecy. His birth is placed immediately after the prophecy. His birth performs the same duty as the initial prophecy, namely to visibly portray the coming defeat of Judah's enemies. The prophecy was a call to trust God and His word rather than those things, or people, which look more favorable.

--Immanuel as messianic prophecy

--In 8:8, Immanuel seems to be pictured as the owner of the land, which would demand a messianic figure as Immanuel. This would seem to display Isaiah's

understanding that the Immanuel prophecy would have a messianic fulfillment or representation.

--Immanuel as comfort for God's people

--In 8:10, Isaiah promises God's people that the nations will never be able to thwart God's plans. Unless God allows the enemies of His people success, they will never defeat His people.

--Immanuel and the virgin birth of Jesus⁶

--Matthew utilized the LXX translation, which is indeed "a virgin shall conceive" rather than "a young woman." As Watts points out, other Greek translators such as Aquila and Symmachus did indeed translate with "young woman" rather than "virgin." Thus even among early Christian translators, opinions were mixed.

--For Matthew, the contextual issues were secondary to the application of the prophecy to Jesus' birth. The important issue for Matthew was to show how Jesus fulfilled the prophecies and promises of the OT. For him the LXX use of "virgin" did exactly that. But the student must remember that Matthew's use of the prophecy was indeed after the fact. He knew the truth of Jesus' virgin birth and saw that Isaiah 7:14 spoke to this. Every Christian interpreter must deal with the fact that the LXX did not technically use the correct Greek term to translate *almah*. Was this providential, mistaken, or coincidence? It could be any of the three. Either way, Matthew saw the connection of Isaiah and Immanuel, as well as a verse to show the importance of the virgin birth.

--Christianity's use of Isaiah 7:14 is to in a sense define the incarnation of Christ--Christology.

--Jesus was "God with us." This is a central tenet of the NT, from Matthew 1:23 to John 1 to Colossians 2:5-11. Jesus was the "Word made flesh," the one who gave us "equality with God" to become a man in order to bring salvation to humanity.

--Jesus' virgin birth is the explanation of the incarnation. God miraculously bestowed a child upon Mary, and this child was the messiah promised in the OT and expected by the Jews of her day.

--In line with Isaiah 8:8, Jesus is portrayed as the controller, i.e. owner, of the world. He can control nature by healing the sick, raising the dead, stopping a storm, and walking on water. While a son of Isaiah or Ahaz could have conveyed the truth of Immanuel for the 8th century (& in fact Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz did), no human child could display this powerful ownership of the earth and ability to deliver His people. This was Jesus as "God with Us."

--8:11-15

^{Isa 8:11} The LORD spoke to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people. He said:

¹² "Do not call conspiracy everything that these people call conspiracy; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it.

¹³ The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you are to fear, he is the one you are to dread,

¹⁴ and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be

⁶ For a good summary of this issue, see John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* in *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 24 (Dallas: Word, 1985), 102-104.

a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.
And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.
¹⁵ Many of them will stumble; they will fall and be broken,
they will be snared and captured."

--Here is a return to the important theme of God's holiness. Because He alone is holy, He deserves His people's fear (i.e. worship & reverence) and obedience. Judah needed to hear His word rather than the word of the enemy kings.

--8:16-18

^{Isa 8:16} Bind up the testimony and seal up the law among my disciples.

¹⁷ I will wait for the LORD, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob.
I will put my trust in him.

¹⁸ Here am I, and the children the LORD has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the LORD Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion.

--This is the prophets confession which serves to conclude the Immanuel prophecy. He and his sons are signs from the Lord. Isaiah's response will be his faith in God.

--8:19-22

^{Isa 8:19} When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? ²⁰ To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. ²¹ Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. ²² Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.

--Judgment will come because the people seek counsel from sources other than the Lord, His words, and His law. This shows their utter lack of faith in the one they call their God. Therefore, Judah will be judged.

--Because they do not seek the Lord's counsel, they are in the "darkness," with no "light of dawn." The next section, 9:1-7 (8:23-9:6 in Hebrew) picks up on this theme of darkness and light.

→ Isaiah 9:1-7

--Future Hope

^{ISA 9:1} Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan—

--This passage is the conclusion to the section of the Book of Isaiah that began with 7:1. What began with a promise of God's presence has moved through a passage of warning and judgment, now to move again to a word of promise. Note the parallel structure with Isaiah 2-4, which also begins and ends with hope and contains words of judgment in the middle.

--This verse promises the return of honor to the land of Zebulun and Naphtali (the northern part of the kingdom of Israel) after a time of gloom and despair. This would appear to be a promise that even though Assyria would defeat Israel, eventually the glory would return.

--Light and Joy

ISA 9:2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

ISA 9:3 You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you
as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.

--Note that the verbs used in this passage (and the next) are translated as perfect, i.e. past action. Most scholars would argue that these are actually “prophetic perfects,” presented as completed action in the Hebrew to declare the certainty of the promises. Even though the events are in the future, they are presented in the past.

--“Light”

--The “great light” has risen like the early morning dawn, driving away the darkness. The light brings God’s presence to those who have experienced the judgment of God, those living in the “shadow of death” (= “deep darkness,” Psalm 23).

--“Light” is used in the Bible to represent God’s presence (or does God choose to reveal Himself in the light?). Does this say something about the nature of light? Perhaps the light is mysterious, powerful, reveals the truth, and clean/pure. Note these verses where “light” is used in reference to God’s presence:

--Isa 2:5 Come, O house of Jacob,
let us walk in the light of the LORD.

-- Isa 10:17 The Light of Israel will become a fire,
their Holy One a flame;

--Isa 60:1 "Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

60:2 See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the LORD rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.

60:3 Nations will come to your **light**,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

-- 2SA 22:29 You are my lamp, O LORD;
the LORD **turns** my darkness **into light**.

--PS 27:1 The LORD is my **light** and my salvation--whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life--of whom shall I be afraid?

--PS 89:15 Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you,
who walk in the **light of** your presence, O LORD.

-- PS 118:27a The LORD is God, and **he has made his light shine** upon us.

--Jn 1⁴ In him was life, and that life was the **light** of men. ⁵ The **light** shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. ^{1:6} There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that **light**, so that through him all men might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the **light**; he came only as a witness to the **light**. ⁹ The true **light** that **gives light to** every man was coming into the world.

--JN 12:35 Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the **light** just a little while longer. Walk while you have the **light**, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. ³⁶ Put your trust in the **light** while you have it, so that you may become sons **of light**." When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

--Acts 9³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a **light** from heaven flashed around him.

--Acts 12⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a **light** shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.

--EPH 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are **light** in the Lord. Live as children of **light**⁹ (for the fruit of the **light** consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth).

--1 JN 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is **light**; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the **light**, as he is in the **light**, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

--"Joy"

--Their joy will come because their nation will be enlarged, like the blessing of the harvest and plunder. These were two great times of rejoicing, as evidenced by harvest festivals and victory processions. They will experience the same joy that the Assyrians enjoyed when plundering them earlier.

--Overthrow of Oppression

ISA 9:4 For as in the day of Midian's defeat,
you have shattered the yoke that burdens them,
the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor.

ISA 9:5 Every warrior's boot used in battle
and every garment rolled in blood
will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.

--In these verses are the first two of three reasons given for the joy they will receive.

1. They have been freed from their oppression.

--Just like through Gideon God brought freedom from Midian, so they will eventually be freed from their oppression. The yokes and bars that bind and oppress them will be removed.

--In Christ we receive freedom from the oppression of sin and as Christians we should work to free others from the yoke of oppression. Jesus brings both spiritual and physical oppression to an end. We must remember these two sides of freedom.

2. Warfare is over. The warrior's clothing will be burned. Thus the time of warfare is now over. All evidence of warfare will be removed from sight & destroyed. This is a cause for rejoicing.

--The Child Messiah

^{ISA 9:6} For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

--Who is this child? Should we see the child connected with Immanuel of Isaiah 7-8, at least canonically? Is the child a literal king or the messiah? These questions and many others come into play when interpreting this text in its context.

--He certainly appears to be a messianic son, not a human king, although some have argued that this is a prophecy of the coronation/birth of an actual king, perhaps Hezekiah. The eternal nature of his kingdom and the extraordinary nature of his reign make the messianic interpretation almost certain.

--“Wonderful Counselor”

--After the utter failure of the kings of Judah and Israel to take and give wise counsel, the messiah will be the “Wonderful Counselor.” He will make wise decisions that will please God and bring about peace. [Note that these two words could be either two titles or one. Most modern scholars would take them as a single title, in parallel with the other three.]

--“Mighty God”

--This title, never used of an earthly king, stresses the power of the messiah. He is the “God of strength” or “God of victory.”

--Everlasting Father”

--Literally “Father until,” stressing the unending nature of his leadership. This title emphasizes the relational nature of the messiah’s reign. It is not only a nation, but also a family.

--“Prince of Peace”

--The messiah will bring about peace. This is the peace that the earthly kings sought through cunning and military might, often against the advice of the prophets of God. But the messiah will bring the long sought after peace to His people.

--The Messiah’s Reign

^{ISA 9:7} Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.
He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom,
Establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness
From that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

--The Reign is eternal—There is no end to the reign of the “Prince of Peace.” Note the return to the theme of “peace,” here as eternal. The role of the leader was to maintain peace, but their leaders had perennially failed in this regard. The Messiah will have no such failures.

--The Reign is just and righteous—The Messiah’s reign will be founded upon and maintained by justice and righteousness, seen earlier as the quintessential building blocks of prophetic religion. He will not fail to do what is right and to show equity to all people.

--Only the Lord will accomplish the reign. “The zeal,” the passion and strength of the Lord will accomplish this kingdom. Isaiah maintained that the present Davidic dynasty was corrupt (beyond repair?) and needed to be replaced. The replacement would be God’s Messiah, although the term is not used in this section of Isaiah. Certainly the teaching here undergirds the theology of Messiah which would be developed later.

--Final Thoughts on Immanuel--

--Isaiah 7:14—The child to be born is a sign of the coming defeat of Aram and Israel. The primary meaning of the sign was that Ahaz and Judah should trust God, because *Immanuel*, “God is with us.” Here the child seems to be an actual child that will soon be born.

--Isaiah 8:1-4—Maher-shalal-hash-baz appears to represent the sign of Immanuel. His function is the same as Immanuel in 7:14.

--Isaiah 8:8—Immanuel is the owner of the land, addressed as if his identity is God Himself. Thus the picture of the coming child seems to be moving to a messianic type of picture.

--Isaiah 9:6-7—“A child” will be born who will (fairly obviously) be a messianic figure. Thus the image that began with a promise of God’s presence with His people has become a picture of the coming Messiah, who would reign in wisdom (unlike Ahaz), power (greater than even Assyria), and peace.

--This messianic figure is fulfilled in Jesus. The NT uses the same language to refer to Jesus. Jesus is the “Light.” He brings justice, and demands justice from His followers. He will rule forever. He brings “Peace,” a peace not understandable by human efforts.

→ Isaiah 10:1-34

--Isaiah 9:7-10:4—This is a single literary unit, a suggestion supported by the presence of a refrain at 9^{12, 17, 21} & 10⁴.

“Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away,
his hand is still upraised.”

--The refrain emphasizes that Israel (Samaria, Ephraim, i.e. the Northern Kingdom) had been warned by repeated judgments in the form of defeats by various enemies. Thus the present judgment should not have been unexpected.

--Further, the refrain points out that the Lord’s anger is not easily satisfied. This final judgment upon Israel will be complete.

--10:1-4—His Anger is not Turned

^{ISA 10:1} Woe to those who make unjust laws,
to those who issue oppressive decrees,

ISA 10:2 to deprive the poor of their rights
and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people,
making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.
ISA 10:3 What will you do on the day of reckoning,
when disaster comes from afar?
To whom will you run for help?
Where will you leave your riches?
ISA 10:4 Nothing will remain but to cringe among the captives
or fall among the slain.

Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away,
his hand is still upraised.

--This passage is similar to others in the prophets offering reason for the coming judgment. The primary crime is oppression of the poor, the widows, and the orphans. These were the unprotected in society. Their very survival depended upon justice in the courts and the leadership, but they have not had that justice (& presumably will not until the Messiah comes!).

--There will be a day of reckoning. When the judgment comes, the oppressor will have no place to run. Their riches will not help them to overcome the Day of Judgment. They will either die or go into captivity.

--10:20-23—The Faithful Remnant

--ISA 10:20 In that day the remnant of Israel,
the survivors of the house of Jacob,
will no longer rely on him who struck them down
but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel.
ISA 10:21 A remnant will return, a remnant of Jacob
will return to the Mighty God.
ISA 10:22 Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand by the sea,
only a remnant will return.
Destruction has been decreed, overwhelming and righteous.
ISA 10:23 The Lord, the LORD Almighty, will carry out
the destruction decreed upon the whole land.

--This paragraph is part of a larger passage (10:5-34) announcing future judgment upon the Assyrians. The current source of judgment will also be held accountable for their actions. The Lord's justice will not ignore the sins of Assyria. This is the same message as the Book of Habakkuk, although that prophet's message is directed toward Babylon.
--The remnant of God's people will return after the judgment and will eventually see the destruction of their enemies. This destruction will also be total.

--Note Romans 9:27-29, where Paul quotes Isaiah 10:22-23 & 1:9 with reference to the salvation of a remnant. There he equates that remnant to those who are saved through Jesus Christ. Paul uses the verb "saved" rather than "return." The LXX uses the same verb as Paul (*sozo*, σωζω).

-- RO 9:30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. ³² Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone." ³³ As it is written:
"See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame."

→ Isaiah 11:1-11

--Isaiah 11:1—The Branch that will Bear Fruit

^{Isa 11:1} A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

--“Stump of Jesse”

--The Davidic line will be reduced to a stump. Thus it will cut off like a mighty tree cut down in the woods. The coming judgment will cut off the line of David. Some have suggested that the mention of “Jesse” instead of David is an emphasis upon David’s humble upbringing. However, it might just as well be simply a return to the beginning of the clan. When David was anointed as king, Jesse’s household was singled out as it is here.

--“Shoot”

--From the “stump” will come a “shoot” or “branch.” What looked like the end of their dynasty was actually an opportunity for a new beginning. Sometimes even from a seemingly dead stump life can arise. Such will be the case here.

--The same terminology is used elsewhere, although the Hebrew terms are different. The Messiah pictured as the shoot or branch is a common one:

--^{Isa 53:2} He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.

--^{Jer 23:5} "The days are coming," declares the LORD,
"when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch,
a King who will reign wisely
and do what is just and right in the land

--^{Jer 33:15} "In those days and at that time

I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line;
he will do what is just and right in the land.

--^{Zec 3:8} "Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men
symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch.

--^{Rev 5:5} Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah,
the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

--^{Rev 22:16} "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the
Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

--“Bear Fruit”

--This is perhaps a contrast with the unfaithful vineyard that bore only bad fruit. In the following verse the branch is described in terms that would characterize “good fruit.” Everything about the Messiah will show his superiority to the previous kings.

--Isaiah 11:2—The Spirit of the Branch

Isa 11:2 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him--
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD--

--“Spirit of the LORD”

--In the OT, the Spirit of the LORD came upon a person (or people) to enable them to accomplish that which the person alone could not achieve. (See Judges 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, 14:6; 1 Sam. 10:6, 16:13-14; 2 Chr. 20:14; Ezek. 11:5; Mic. 3:8; and Is. 61:1=Luke 4:14 for examples.)

--The Messiah will faithfully carry out His mission as godly leader because the Holy Spirit will lead him. In fact, the Holy Spirit will “rest on him.” The Holy Spirit will be with Him in what He does.

--“Wisdom and understanding”

--“Wisdom” focuses upon the skill to make practical decisions, as Childs points out, “discerning good and evil.”⁷ Wisdom was required for living everyday life. Possessing wisdom gave one the ability to live a life of justice and righteousness.

--Together the terms refer to the totality of mental capacity required to rule the nation. Without wisdom and understanding decisions may be made for selfish, greedy, or self-aggrandizing motives. Solomon asked for wisdom to reign the kingdom. The famous story of the two women and their children illustrates the wisdom of Solomon—a difficult situation solved by divine-given wisdom with concern only for what is right.

--“Counsel and Power”

--One of the major failures of the present and former kings was failure to take good counsel, a problem well illustrated by Isaiah’s own ministry with Ahaz in the current section of the Book of Isaiah. This will not be a problem for the coming Messiah. He will be given wisdom and understanding to follow proper counsel, given from God Himself.

--He will also have the power to carry out the proper decisions to their completion. Unlike human kings, the Messiah will not suffer from either human mental or physical deficiencies.

--“Knowledge and Fear”

--“Knowledge of God” is a general description of the proper relationship with God, as Isaiah suggested in Isaiah 1:3 (see also Hosea 2:20, 4:1, where the coming judgment is caused specifically by Israel’s lack of knowledge).

--“Fear of the LORD” is the proper response to God’s holiness. It is the response of Isaiah in chapter 6, standing in reverence & awe of God’s perfection and terrifying holiness. In the OT, “fear” is the representation of proper worship before God.

⁷ Childs, 103.

--All of these characteristics are intertwined. Wisdom, understanding, counsel, and power are enhanced human abilities. They are enhanced by the proper relationship with God, represented in this text by knowledge and fear. Only when the leader is properly in tune with the Spirit of God can he or she reach leadership potential.

--Of course, the reality is that human reason is unable to fulfill all of its potential. Thus, the divine nature of the Messiah must be recognized. Human leaders do their best by seeking and following God's leadership. But the Messiah will bring into existence true godly leadership.

--Isaiah 11:3-5—The Reign of Justice and Righteousness

^{Isa 11:3} and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;

^{Isa 11:4} but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.

He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.

^{Isa 11:5} Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

--Righteousness vs. Eyes and Ears

--The success of the Messiah's reign will stem from the fact that his rule will not be based solely upon human insight, prowess, and strength. Instead, His judgments and decision-making processes will be based upon justice and righteousness. His treatment of the poor is offered as an example. While human leadership may see the poor as a class of people to be exploited and used, in the messianic age the poor will be treated with equity and fairness. The poor always held a special place in God's scheme, probably because they are willing to be dependant upon Him rather than their own abilities and wealth. Faith is easier when one's own strength and ability is limited and/or unable to solve the problems that one faces. Such is the position of the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner in the land—all groups of people that were often oppressed but loved by God and whose case the prophets championed.

--“Rod of his mouth”

--This interesting term recognizes that the Messiah's power will not be seen in His physical strength or military might; rather His power will lie in His words. God spoke the world into creation and the Messiah will rule the final eschatological kingdom by His word.

--“Belt” & “Sash”

--The prophetic concepts of righteousness & faithfulness are here described as the basic clothing of the Messiah. In the eschatological age the current wrongs done to the oppressed will be erased. The Messiah will not only show righteousness & faithfulness, He will actually wear them as clothing. Righteousness & faithfulness will be a very part of who He is.

--(Note that righteousness [*tsedeq*, צֶדֶק] is 1st paired with justice [*mishpat*, מִשְׁפָּט] and then with faithfulness [^e*munah*, אֱמוּנָה]. These terms are often used interchangeably, often along with the 4th term for loyalty or mercy [*hesed*, חֶסֶד]).

--Faithfulness [^e*munah*, אֱמוּנָה] refers to firmness, steadfastness, and trustworthiness. Thus the Messiah will remain strong and firm, never wavering in strength, wisdom, or righteousness, because all of these things come from God Himself.

--Isaiah 11:6-9—The Reign of Peace

^{ISA 11:6} The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.

^{ISA 11:7} The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox.

^{ISA 11:8} The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.

^{ISA 11:9} They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

--Re-creation of the world

--In a sense this is a return to the pre-fall state of creation. The enmity between the human and the snake (i.e. Gen. 3:15) is no longer present. The relationship between wild and domesticated animals—prey and hunter—is changed. The human fear of the wild beasts is removed.

--However, as Childs points out, this new eschatological is actually a total re-creation of the world.⁸ God's power has changed the known world into a totally new entity. This is the "peaceable kingdom" of Edward Hicks, the Quaker artist of the early 19th century.

--The pre-fall state is no longer possible in the present world. Only a new creation will bring about the needed changes in the nature of humanity and the created order. The need for a new creation by God is present in other texts of the Bible, both Old and New Testament.

--In Jeremiah 31:31-34, the prophet spoke of the need for a new covenant to replace the old.

--In Ezekiel 36:24-26, that prophet spoke of the need for a new heart to replace the evil, cold heart of present humanity.

--In 2 Cor. 5:17, Paul wrote of salvation in Christ as a "new creation," with everything becoming new and the old passing away.

--"Knowledge of the Lord"

--Only mutual commitment to the LORD will bring about peace. Only when everyone seeks and receives the "knowledge of the Lord" and acquiesces to it will this kingdom of peace come about.⁹ In the reign of the Messiah, this necessary

⁸ Childs, 103-104.

⁹ Oswalt, vol. 1, 284.

knowledge will cover the earth like the oceans. It will be both obvious and unmistakable.

--Perhaps this same vision is present in Philippians 2:9-11, where the exaltation of Jesus will be known and acknowledged by “every knee.”

--Isaiah 11:10-11—The Remnants & the Nations

^{ISA 11:10} In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. ¹¹ In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea.

--As in Isaiah 2, the nations will stream to God, here identified with the “Root of Jesse” from 11:1. This leaves no doubt concerning the identity of the “Root.” The “Root” is divine, certainly none other than the Messiah.

--The “Root” is the “banner.” This is a popular term for Isaiah. In 5:26, the “banner” is raised to call the nations to come and judge the people of Judah for their sins.

^{ISA 5:26} He lifts up a **banner** for the distant nations,
he whistles for those at the ends of the earth.
Here they come,
swiftly and speedily!

--In Isaiah 49:22, the Lord says that the banner will lead the **Gentiles** to bring home the people from exile.

-- ^{ISA 49:22} This is what the Sovereign LORD says:
"See, I will beckon to the Gentiles,
I will lift up my **banner** to the peoples;
they will bring your sons in their arms
and carry your daughters on their shoulders.

--In the present verse, the banner will lead the nations to the LORD. Like the flag in the National Anthem (“Star Spangled **Banner**”), the Lord’s banner, the Messiah, will lead His people home. And his people will include the faithful from all nations.

--This is also a detailed description of the return of the promised remnant, from Assyria, Egypt, Cush, Elam, Babylonia, Hamath, and “the islands.” Most scholars consider the detail of this account to require a later date than Isaiah, probably in the post-exilic period. While this conclusion is possible, the student’s conclusion on this matter will depend on the individual’s opinion of inspiration and the nature of prophecy. The interpretation of the text is actually unaffected either way. It is a promise of the remnant, which is totally Isaianic.

→ Isaiah 12:1-6

Isa 12:1 In that day you will say:

"I will praise you, O LORD.

Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away
and you have comforted me.

Isa 12:2 Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.

The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song;
he has become my salvation."

Isa 12:3 With joy you will draw water
from the wells of salvation.

Isa 12:4 In that day you will say:

"Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name;
make known among the nations what he has done,
and proclaim that his name is exalted.

Isa 12:5 Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things;
let this be known to all the world.

Isa 12:6 Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion,
for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."

--The first major section of the Book of Isaiah concludes with this song of praise. It is set in the eschaton, "in that day." Thus this could perhaps be called the "Song of the Messiah," or at least of the Messianic age. Note how the themes of the earlier chapters reverberate in the words of the psalm.

--"Your anger has turned away"—

--This is acknowledgement that judgment has come, and probably that it was deserved. God's anger was justified, but now His anger has been removed and replaced with blessing.

--"I will trust"—

--Perhaps the key theme in Isaiah 1-12 is "Who will you trust?" In the messianic age, the people will declare their trust in God. He will be their strength in whom they rely. No longer will they seek the strength of Assyria, rather at last they will learn to trust in God.

--"With joy you will draw water"—

--Previously they had rejected the "waters of Shiloah," only to be inundated by the floodwaters of Assyria. In the days of messiah, they will receive water from the very well of salvation. They will learn to trust God and his supply.

--"The Holy One of Israel among you"—

--At long last the people of God will recognize the truth of Immanuel. They will recognize, and rejoice in the fact that, God is "among" them. The messianic age is, therefore, a complete reversal of the present age, when God's people rejected Him, looked to other sources for help, and faced judgment from God (see also Jeremiah 2:13ff).