



“The LORD God Calls for Faith”
Isaiah 7:1-8:8
October 23, 2022

This morning we come once again to the book of Isaiah. As we open the pages of Scripture again, we come to one of the hardest aspects of the Christian life. It is something basic to walking with God, and yet it can be a profound challenge. It is to trust in the Lord with all of your heart and to lean NOT on your own understanding.

This is the will of the Lord for you in the midst of the temptations that you face, in the midst of the trials that you pass through, and in the midst of the anxieties that you carry. God is calling you to trust in Him, and not your own clever schemes and solutions. God intends to be your greatest ally. He desires that you trust in Him and walk in His truth instead of trying to manufacture your own results. God wants you to walk in His power.

Here is something that we need to be clear about. It's not just that trusting in ourselves rather than trusting in God misses opportunities for His glory to be displayed in our lives. It is also that trusting in ourselves and not trusting in God is SIN. It is a way of rejecting God. It is a way of trusting in created things above the Creator.

And such rejection incurs the judgment and discipline of God upon the believer, and we need to take these things to heart if we are going to make sense of the intensity that is before us as we read our Scripture this morning in Isaiah Chapters 7 and 8.

This morning we see the importance of all of this as Isaiah takes us to a pivotal moment in the life of Ahaz, the head of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. A threatening coalition of northern powers was coming against him. Instead of trusting God to see him through all of this, he was thinking about paying Assyria for help because that is what made sense to him.

So God sent Isaiah to the very threshold of this decision to call Ahaz to faith; to call him to act like a believer; to trust in God alone. In this text, we see his decision and we see its consequences. Spoil Alert: He did not choose well.

As we read through an extended portion of Scripture, here is a very brief outline of it. Watch for it:

The moment of decision (7:1- 12)

The outcome of rejection in what followed (7:13-8:8)

So follow along as I read from Isaiah beginning in Chapter 7 and Verse 1:

¹In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the King of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to

wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. ²When the house of David was told, “Syria is in league with Ephraim,” the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

³And the LORD said to Isaiah, “Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shearjashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer’s Field. ⁴And say to him, ‘Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. ⁵Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, ⁶“Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it,” ⁷thus says the Lord GOD:

“It shall not stand,
and it shall not come to pass.

⁸For the head of Syria is Damascus,
and the head of Damascus is Rezin.
And within sixty-five years
Ephraim will be shattered from being a people.

⁹And the head of Ephraim is Samaria,
and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.
If you are not firm in faith,
you will not be firm at all.”

¹⁰Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: ¹¹“Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹²But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. ¹⁷The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father’s house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria!”

¹⁸In that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is at the end of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. ¹⁹And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thornbushes, and on all the pastures.

²⁰In that day the Lord will shave with a razor that is hired beyond the River—with the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet, and it will sweep away the beard also.

²¹In that day a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, ²²and because of the abundance of milk that they give, he will eat curds, for everyone who is left in the land will eat curds and honey.

²³In that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briars and thorns.

²⁴With bow and arrows a man will come there, for all the land will be briers and thorns. ²⁵And as for all the hills that used to be hoed with a hoe, you will not come there for fear of briers and thorns, but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread.

⁸Then the LORD said to me, “Take a large tablet, and write on it in common characters, ‘Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz.’ ²And I will get reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah, to attest for me.”

³And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, “Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz; ⁴for before the boy knows how to cry ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.”

⁵The LORD spoke to me again: ⁶“Because this people has refused the waters of Shiloh that flow gently, and rejoice over Rezin and the sons of Remaliah, ⁷therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks, ⁸and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.”

And because the Lord God of Heaven and Earth has spoken to us, we say, AMEN.

Kristy and I live on a street in Long Beach that is lined with sycamore trees. I am convinced that the one in front of our house is the largest sycamore tree in all of Long Beach. Even my neighbor has pointed out how it towers over the other trees in our neighborhood. If you get far away, you can see that it is pretty impressive in its height. It is taller than the other trees around us.

When the Santa Ana winds start to blow in the fall with all their warmth and intensity, we can hear the leaves rattling in the wind. Then all of the tree leaves dump down on our house and on our lawn and, yes, on our neighbor’s lawn too. Maybe that is why he has noticed the size of our tree!

Not only do the leaves fall, but the branches fall as well, sometimes doing damage on any car that is parked underneath that tree. So if you ever come to our house, don’t park in front of our house. Park across the street.

This portion of Isaiah opens up with this kind of imagery, with the heart of King Ahaz, and the hearts of all of the people of Judah shaking like the leaves on the trees of the forest at the onset of a massive windstorm. The question was, in the midst of this storm, would King Ahaz lead his people into the shelter of God’s power, or would he lead them into a shelter of his own design?

This question persists into the day that we live in into the people of God: When the storms of life come, are you going to take refuge in God or are you going to take refuge in a shelter of your own?

Brothers and sisters, the reality is that we need to be trusting in Jesus in the midst of all of the affairs of life, even for our daily bread asking God to fill our hearts with faith in Christ who is the One who provides for us. But there is something about the trials of life that reveal where our confidence lies.

The burden of this portion of Isaiah is to help us, the people of God, to stop trusting in ourselves and in the alliances we form in our own strength and to rely on Immanuel, who is God with us.

So this text takes us into a crisis that was being faced in the days of the divided kingdom of Israel. To understand all the names, all of the kingdoms, and everything that is mentioned in these verses, we must remember your Old Testament history.

After the death of Solomon, the son of David, there was civil war in Israel so that the twelve tribes of Israel were fractured. The ten tribes to the north seceded and then formed their own kingdom state. The Bible refers to that northern kingdom as Israel. In our text it is also referred to as Ephraim after one of its prominent tribes. Their capital city was Samaria. Their king was Pekeh, son of Remeliah.

Meanwhile, the two tribes to the south remained faithful to the Davidic dynasty. The Bible calls this southern kingdom Judah. In this text it is also called the house of David. The capital city remained Jerusalem and its current king was Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the grandson of Uzziah. Looking at the story of this young man Ahaz in the historic books of the Old Testament, he was not a good king. He was a wicked king. He did not walk in the ways of the Lord and that is to put it mildly.

Now it is about the year 735 BC, and the crisis of Isaiah's generation was then surging onto the scene in the form of the Assyrian empire rising in the east. Assyria was like a giant carnivorous fish swimming around in the pond. It was growing, exposing its teeth, a dominating and consuming nation and it was coming for Palestine.

The smaller kingdoms in the land of Palestine were no match for the beast of a nation, the great white shark that was coming. So Israel joined forces with Syria, a neighbor to the north. They were in a pact of mutual defense against Assyria. They wanted the collaboration of Judah in the south for further support and they were not just asking for it, they were demanding it.

Ahaz was resisting this because he had other ideas. Meanwhile, the alliance of Syria and the northern tribes of Israel, they came and were marching against Ahaz, against Jerusalem, and they wanted to take Ahaz aside and replace him with a puppet king of their own. Everyone was shaken. The heart of King Ahaz was shaking. Seeing the insecurity in the heart of their leader, the people's hearts were shaking. Everybody was shaking.

Meanwhile, looking at Verse 1 the prophetic eye:

¹In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the King of Syria and Pekah the son of Remeliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it.

We see that their plan would not prevail, for God had promised that a descendent of David would remain on the throne in Jerusalem. God would not have this young man who was called the son of Tabeel enthroned in Jerusalem. God said that it would not happen.

You can even see this at the beginning of Verse 1. They were trying to march against Jerusalem and it says that they “**came to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it.**” They could not because God was providentially at work, honoring His promise even in the reign of an unfaithful king.

But Ahaz did not believe that. His heart was shaken. He preferred to come up with a more practical plot that made sense to him. He was planning to form an alliance with the big fish, the big carnivorous fish, because he felt more normal devising his own solution to the problem. And we learn from II Kings Chapter 16 that he tried to hire Assyria, using silver and gold from the very temple treasury of the Lord God.

But this portion of Scripture, this moment we have before us this morning, it is given in the midst of that time of decision when Ahaz was deciding what he would do to respond to the alliance coming down on his head. So Isaiah was sent by God even to this wicked king to counsel him, to appeal to him, to point him to the Lord and to call him to faith in that critical time in his life and in the life of the nation.

Likewise, echoing forth from this text comes the call the Holy Spirit to His people in the times of life when it feels like it matters the most, when there are critical things coming against us and we want to plot our schemes in response to what people are doing against us, God is calling us to trust in Him. “Let me be your shelter. Walk in me. Abide in me, and I will be your ally in the midst of what you face.”

We still have the tendency to want to do things our way and in ways that are not in keeping with the pages of Scripture, and the humility and honesty that God wants to call us to. We like to manipulate things to our own debt. And this text is calling us to trust the Lord; to trust the Lord with all of our hearts and to lean not on our own understanding.

This portion of Scripture is incredibly complex and it is a long portion of Scripture. There is so much here. I have been swimming in the glorious complexity of it all week. I’m going to try and boil it down here because what I think the Lord is trying to do is to firm up our faith. Just like we sang in the song this morning, He knows how we are and He knows how we can be weakened within. Yet it is the will of the Lord that we walk in the strength of faith.

The Holy Spirit is the One who gives us this substance and He gives us this substance through the living oracles of the Word of God. So God is speaking in this text to put steel in our spines and to help us walk in the ways of the Lord.

I want for us to see three outstanding elements of this that helps put things in perspective. The whole text is amazing, but three aspects of it stood out to me. These are three aspects of truth that God is giving us to firm up our faith. First, God gives us a comical comparison. Second, to firm up our faith, God gives us a sobering proverb. Third, to firm up our faith, God gives a stunning sign.

To firm up our faith:

1. God gives a comical comparison (7:3-4)

God was approaching Ahaz through Isaiah.

³And the LORD said to Isaiah, “Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shearjashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer’s Field.

God did not tell Isaiah, “Go find him at the temple where he has been calling upon My name for help.” That is not what God said. There was nothing in the life of Ahaz that would have ever indicated to us that he was calling on the name of the Lord in his crisis.

Instead, Ahaz was out checking on the water supply. There is prudence in that. There was no problem with what he was doing. The problem was in what he had not done. He had not called upon the name of the Lord.

Ahaz was not seeking God. But God was seeking him, because He wanted to do a work in his life. And Isaiah was to go with his son, “Shear-Jashub” which means “A Remnant Shall Return.” “A Remnant Shall Return” was God’s way of reassuring Ahaz that His remnant, His elect, would always return with the victory.

Then we see the Word of the Lord to him when Ahaz was checking out the water reservoir. Verse 4 is where we see this comparison after God’s lovely call to faith:

⁴And say to him, ‘Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah.

There is the comparison. Isaiah compared these powerful kings to smoldering stumps.

The essence of this is, “Ahaz, are you worried about these men? Why are you worried about them! They are nothing. They have no strength before me. They are just like a couple of burned out logs left in the firepit from last night’s camp fire.”

Have you ever noticed when you go camping, that log that seems so big? After it has been smoldering in the coals all night, you touch it with the poker and it falls apart. That is what God was comparing them to. From God’s perspective, that was all the power that they had.

In the commentaries I have read, there are some really helpful attempts to convey the sense of this. One of the most memorable one's for me was one commentator who said, "You are worried about these guys? They are nothing but a couple burned out, snuffed out, cigarette butts." I read this and thought "yuck!" But that was what God was doing here. He was trying to give them perspective by means of this comparison, saying that that is all they were.

So God was speaking these kinds of images to us to help us in the midst of the problems that we face. Notice that God was not being dismissive about the fury of it all. He was saying, "I know that they are coming after you with fierce anger. But what is that in comparison to the one who reigns over all things; to the one who is a consuming fire? And if God is with you, who can be against you?"

So God was speaking into this optical illusion that I have been struggling with for decades and maybe some of you struggle with it too. It is the tendency to see the challenges and the problems we face as inflated and huge. Meanwhile we see the Living God who reigns over all as limited and smaller than He really is. This kind of imagery is given here to give us a restored vision of the power of our God to work on our behalf in the midst of the struggles that we face.

God is calling you to faith, saying, "Be careful about the tendency within you to minimize me and to come up with your schemes. Be careful. Be quiet. Be still. Know that I am God. Do not fear and do not let your heart be faint. What is the worst that man can do to you?"

It seems pretty threatening that a human being can kill me, and Christians have been killed. But in view of eternity, what is that because Jesus is going to resurrect the body and it is going to live forever and ever and ever in the glory of His Kingdom. And Jesus is the One in this life and for all eternity who fights for His people. And we need to rest in Him and walk in His ways.

This is the first aspect of this passage that God gives to strengthen our faith and to help us to walk in the ways of the Lord who sees the problems we are facing from the perspective of an everlasting and unshakable kingdom.

To firm up our faith, God gave a comical comparison. Second, He gave:

2. A sobering proverb (7:5-9)

We see what is next in Verses 5 through 9. The proverb is at the end of Verse 9

⁵Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, ⁶"Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it," ⁷thus says the Lord GOD:

**"It shall not stand,
and it shall not come to pass.
⁸For the head of Syria is Damascus,**

**and the head of Damascus is Rezin.
And within sixty-five years
Ephraim will be shattered from being a people.
’And the head of Ephraim is Samaria,
and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.
IF YOU ARE NOT FIRM IN FAITH,
YOU WILL NOT BE FIRM AT ALL.’”**

In Verses 5 through 9, God let Ahaz know that he was perfectly aware of what their plot was; what they were trying to pull off. He let Ahaz know that the plot that was being advanced against Judah was being led by mere men. He assured Ahaz that their plans would not prevail. God would not allow it. It would not stand.

Then at the conclusion of this, Isaiah really brought what can be identified as the central point of this whole portion of the Word of God in Isaiah. He said:

**’If you are not firm in faith,
you will not be firm at all.**

This makes faith and trust in the Lord the central, crucial, unavoidable question of our lives. The righteous will live by faith. Praise God, this is a faith that the Holy Spirit is at work to supply us with, and increase in us.

This is a memorable wordplay.

**’If you are not firm in faith,
you will not be firm at all.**

Many commentators as clear and as true to the Hebrew text as that memorable statement of truth is, they make some attempts to help convey the essence of it. One of those is this: “Hold God in doubt, and you’ll not hold out.” Or, “If you’re unsure, you’re insecure.” This is a call to trust—to just trust in the One who created you and sustains you in the midst of this life and all it holds.

This is a reminder for us that the human being is designed to walk with God. In the beginning, we were built to know God and to trust in Him. At the beginning of all things, we were designed with a dependency on the Lord.

Did it ever occur to you that in Genesis Chapter 1 before there was any curse or sin, God created the man and the woman, then spoke instruction and guidance into their lives? We are built with the need for God’s Word to know God and to walk with Him, and faith is walking with the Lord. It is trusting in Him.

But if we suppress the knowledge of God and refuse to trust in the One who holds all things together, then how can anything go right? Then things unravel. Then things fall apart, so that is why it is stated in the way that it is. If you are not firm in faith, if you are not walking in the Lord and trusting in Him, you will not be firm at all.

So we need to be found taking refuge in the One who holds us together, walking by faith; trusting in Him and the guidance He gives by His Spirit and in His Word throughout this life and all that it holds.

So this proverb comes to us. To firm up our faith. God gave this short, direct, powerful statement of truth:

**⁹If you are not firm in faith,
you will not be firm at all.**

I don't know about you, but when I read that I think, "Lord, sometimes my faith is like shifting sand, so be at work inside of me to make my trust in You solid ground and help me to stand on Your promises and to walk by faith."

Then third: To firm our faith, God gave:

3. A stunning sign (7:10-16)

As we continue into what is next, it would seem that the proverb that we just read in Verse 9, concluded Isaiah's first approach with Ahaz. He left that conclusion hanging in the air. We don't know for how long. It could have been moments. It could have been a couple of days. But it seems that there was something of a pause here.

Ahaz was not ready to commit. Isaiah was able to see this in him. Ahaz was not ready to hand everything over to God and trust Him to work as God promised that He would work. Ahaz kept on looking at the water supply and maybe then moved on to the granaries after that.

Then the Lord came with the next approach:

¹⁰Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: ¹¹"Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."

Let us pause and let us recognize what a unique and critical moment this was in the biblical account of redemptive history, especially in the life of the Old Testament Kingdom of Judah. God had offered Ahaz a blank check.

God said, "Ask for a sign. Ask for a miraculous confirmation of the promise I have made that I am going to come through for you and the house of David. Ask me to perform any wonder that you want me to perform. It can be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven. I will stop at nothing. You tell me what you want me to do to confirm the promise that I have made."

Think about the possibilities that are here. If Ahaz were a man filled with the knowledge of God, how God worked throughout the pages of Old Testament Scripture, think about some of the things that might have come to his mind.

God was talking about the depths of Sheol. Ahaz could have asked God to shake the earth, open the mouth of Sheol as it was as recorded in Numbers Chapter 16 during Korah's rebellion against Moses when "the earth opened its mouth and swallowed all those in rebellion and their households." Ahaz, "Let's see a giant rift in the earth that God can create to consume the armies of the alliance coming against us and for that big great white shark Assyria too!" He could have gone downward.

Ahaz could have gone upward. He could have remembered Joshua the son of Nun and how when he was in battle he asked the Lord to stop the movement of the sun in the sky, causing the sun to stand still to prolong the day. And God suspended the rotation of the stars and the earth in its course. God caused it to happen—an astonishing and miraculous account given to us in the pages of Scripture.

Think of what Ahaz could have asked for if his heart had been attuned with his ancestor David who came to the knowledge of the great, divine Messiah that was to come, thinking of the One that he came to worship and spoke of in Psalm 110—the prophecy that Jesus loved and repeated often. How David said:

**¹The Lord says to my Lord:
"Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool."**

Ahaz could have asked for the appearance of the Messiah and the golden age that Isaiah had already been prophesizing about to Israel. He could have said, "Why don't we just go for the glory and bring in the Messianic reign now!"

And God was offering it. It was a stunning moment in the Bible that we reading about right now. And God was serious. He wanted to bolster the faith of this man Ahaz. Verse 12:

¹²But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test."

And all of the air was released, leaving the balloon limp and deflated. Ahaz refused to ask God for a sign, and he shrouded his refusal in pious language. Yes, there is a way of putting God to the test. That is when a person refuses to believe God unless God meets the person's demand and passes the test that they are approaching God with. There is a way of testing God.

However, that is not what happened here because God was the one who was proffering the sign. God was the one approaching and He was approaching with determination, saying, "Ask for it." This is in the imperative form. God was seeking to strengthen the heart of the king of Judah and the king of Judah said, "No, I won't put the Lord to the test."

This was hypocrisy. The reality is that Ahaz knew that once he received the sign of his choice from God, he would have increased accountability to God. He knew that if he let God in, then God was going to take control and he would be painted into a corner that he did not want to be painted into.

He was then going to have to walk in the ways of the Living God, and he already had another plan in place; his own scheme and was already thinking about what it would take to purchase Assyria. That is what was happening here.

Looking at what comes next, we see that God was resolved to provide the sign of his power and that He is with His remnant, His people, His elect, His church, the redeemed community. Isaiah responded in Verse 13:

¹³And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?”

God saw what was happening and so did His prophet. Verse 14:

¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.

Here particularly in Verse 14, we have one of the memorable and outstanding prophecies of the Bible. It is Messianic prophecy. It is about Jesus, the King. It is a clear prophecy and yet it is not easy to understand. It is clear and it is complex at the same time. I remind you that I have been swimming in the complexity of it all week long.

Here is what is clear: What we read in Verse 14 is a prophetic declaration of the virgin birth of the Messiah and in Him, the incarnation of God and of God being present with His people. Isaiah was talking about a virgin conceiving a child while remaining a virgin. It is a supernatural conception brought about without the involvement of a human father, but by the power of the Holy Spirit within the creative work of God within the womb.

And it is clear that his child is Immanuel, which means, God with us. Not only is it “God is with us,” as in God is on our side, but God is in the world. He is Immanuel—God in the world as a human being. I am convinced that Isaiah was conscious of all of this when he gave that prophecy that is recorded in Verse 14.

The linguistics of Isaiah’s Hebrew allows for it. The later commentary of the Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament confirms it. The fact that even Isaiah understood these things becomes clear as we move into the portions of Scripture that are ahead us next week and in the following weeks.

Isaiah was given eyes to see the unique glory of the Messiah. Next week we are going to get into Chapter 9 and speaking of the same One prophesied in Isaiah Chapter 7 and Verse 14, we are going to read in Isaiah Chapter 9 and Verses 6 and 7:

**⁶For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of peace.
⁷of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.**

The one prophesied in Isaiah Chapter 7 and Verse 14 is also spoken of in those verses. Then guess what: After that, we are going to get into Isaiah Chapter 11, where we are going to see the glory of the kingdom that He is going to bring to this earth in a display of power and peace. In Chapter 11, we will see how the Spirit of God is going to rest upon Him in a way that is absolutely unique in human history. There is going to be such peace that even the animal realm is going to be at peace with each other like they were in the days of Adam before the curse.

I think that the virgin birth of the Messiah is what Isaiah was talking about. That is my assertion in Verse 14. That is what is clear.

Here is the complexity: You can see that Isaiah also attached the birth of this child to the day that he was living in and the crisis that he was facing with Judah. Do you see that in the verses that follow? That is where we wonder what was going on with the next part. Because the birth of this child spoken of in Verse 14 is a time marker for the present crisis Ahaz and Judah were facing.

So that in Verse 15 we see that this child would soon be eating curds and wild honey. By the way, that is not luxury food, that is poverty food. There would be effects of the warfare that was taking place. While this one was still a child, he would be eating curds and wild honey.

Then it says in Verse 16 that the declaration of this prophesy is that before this child was old enough to develop its moral compass—it was a human child, after all, growing in the ways that human beings grow. Before this child was able to know the right from the wrong, Pekah and Rezin would be laid waste.

So how does that work in view of Christ, the Immanuel? Because Jesus was not here born of a virgin in the flesh for any of that. Jesus was not born until seven-hundred-years later. Yet, the birth of Immanuel was also a time marker, so how does that work? I have been reading about this and inevitably I think I am giving you some of the sweat of my study and not just the fruit. I was probing around in this all week long. And there are some really good explanations that are given about this.

But this is what I think was going on here. I am laying this out somewhat cautiously with an open hand. I am going to tell you what makes sense to me in view of everything that is written here.

The marvelous prophesy of the virgin birth and the coming of Immanuel is what Ahaz could have seen happen in his time if he would have asked. Because it is evident that God had something spectacular in mind when He told Ahaz to ask for what he wanted. This was vibrating with the expectation of something awesome.

So what if Ahaz would have asked in keeping with King David once again like in the Twenty-Fourth Psalm?

**⁹Lift up your heads, O gates!
and lift them up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
¹⁰who is the King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory!**

What if Ahaz would have prayed like that? This bends the mind because we know that Christ came at God's appointed hour, yet He gave a sincere offer here. It seems that this offer was absolutely pulsing with Messianic expectation.

However, Ahaz did not go there. Because he refused to ask what he might have asked for and to trust God, what I understand is that the details of this prophesy were redrafted and attached to the child conceived by Isaiah and his wife in a natural way, because we read in the next chapter that the language is very, very similar about what is here in this paragraph of Chapter 7 and the next one of Chapter 8.

Chapter 7 and Verse 16:

**¹⁶For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land
whose two kings you dread will be deserted.**

Then we have the account of Isaiah going to be with the prophetess, with his wife who, though chaste sister in God, was not a virgin. They had another son named Shear-jashub.

So Isaiah had this child and God said, "This is what His name is going to be. It is not going to be Immanuel. It is going to be Maher-Shalel-Hash-Baz, born by natural means. What I see happening here is that elements of the one prophecy that could have been was redrafted and applied to this third child that is spoken of here in this text.

Maher-Shalel-Hash-Baz means "Speed the spoil, haste the plunder." And before this boy could form his first words, momma and daddy, the alliance of Syria and Israel would be destroyed and the wealth of the capital cities would be plundered, but Judah would not benefit from it because not only was Ahaz going to call Assyria, now so was God.

And they could have had the peaceful waters of Shiloah as we read later in the chapter. Instead what they had was the flood waters of the Euphrates. That is a way of understanding this and I offer it to you. I am thankful that in keeping with what I think I was reading in the great commentary by Alec Motyer, this all makes sense to me.

But what about the ultimate fulfillment of that spectacular sign? The ultimate fulfillment of the virgin birth and the coming of Immanuel did not come in 700 BC. Rather it came at the time of God's chosen with the coming of Christ. We read of it here in this beautiful text in Matthew Chapter 1 and Verses 18 to 23:

¹⁸Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

²³Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us)

Why didn't he quote the rest of it? Because the rest of it was fulfilled back in Maher-Shalel-Has-Baz. He quoted this because this spectacular, stunning sign of God's intent and purpose to be with His people as their greatest ally was fulfilled in Christ; in Jesus; in the virgin birth of the Messiah who is divine in nature and who is God and man in one. Christ our Immanuel!

Brothers and sisters, this is God's sign to you; that He will be your refuge of shelter and strength; that He will keep you from all eternal harm, and that He will be with you throughout this life and all that it holds—that Christ is with us. That Jesus comes to save us and to indwell us and to remain with us.

The Gospel of Matthew begins and ends with Immanuel. At the beginning, "You shall call Him Immanuel, which means God is with us." At the end, the Great Commission, "Go out and make disciples and surely, I am with you always."

So the Lord gives us this truth, the truth of Immanuel to help us and to bring us to a living faith in Him that we will trust in the Lord with all our hearts and lean not on our own understanding. That in all of our ways we will acknowledge Him and He will make our paths straight. That we will not be wise in our own eyes but that we will walk in His ways. That we will wholly, wholly trust in the Lord, and there are so many ways in which the Lord is calling us to faith.

First and foremost, Immanuel has come, calling for faith and by the work of the Spirit, planting faith and creating and nurturing its growth. First and foremost, you are to trust in Jesus to make you right with God for the forgiveness of sin. This is by far and away the most important question of your existence. It is being right in the sight of the holiness of God and trusting and resting in Jesus alone for the provision of right standing before God.

Because what comes into the understanding of so many people when it comes to that final day is that they will stand before the Lord and say, “Well, I hope I can merit enough good things in my life so that the good deeds will outweigh the bad deeds, and if the good deeds outweigh the bad deeds, maybe I will make it in.” That is rubbish. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. It falls drastically short. The wages of sin is death.

But in the ultimate question of your existence is that Christ came into the world to save His people from their sins to wash them away; to detach it; to cleanse it, and to cover them in righteousness.

In this greatest question. lean not on your own understanding. You trust in the Gospel that Jesus saves sinners. Trust in Him. There are so many different ways in life where we continue walking by faith, trusting in Him and not in our own schemes and devices and plots and ways of getting back and getting even.

Maybe you’ve had a longstanding dispute with someone and that person is tweaking the truth about you and maligning your character. An impulse is coming up within you that two can play that game. “You tweaked the truth about me, so I’m going to tweak the truth about you, and I can do it effectively.” And you feel like you want to balance the scales in this way.

“You talk about me and I’m going to talk about you,” when the Lord is saying, “Trust in me with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding. You just walk in humility and in honesty, and you trust in me to take care of the issues of your reputation. You just lean in on me. Trust in me.”

Maybe you have been working hard at your place of employment for a promotion and somebody is manipulating things to get ahead of you for the promotion you have tried so hard for. Your flesh is saying, “I’m going to manipulate things too, because two can play this game.”

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your path straight.

Maybe in the midst of the disappointments of life and the hardships that you are facing, you are feeling like you have been done wrong. And maybe you feel like complaining and rendering guilt trips is the way to get back at the people who are causing you trouble, but Jesus is telling you to walk the path of peace, abiding in His Spirit to bear fruit in you that is supernatural in origin, producing the fruit of love even in the face of those who have not come through for you the way that you have desired.

This is the way of Jesus. This is the way of the Messiah. And we need for Jesus to fill us with His Spirit because we have the spring-loaded tendency within us not to do things His way, but to do things our way. This is called sin and Jesus wants to take that spring-loaded mechanism and crush it, and fill us with His Spirit instead, bringing through us the life of distinctiveness. And it is His work in us.

As we read earlier in the text, in the Word of the Lord: Be careful. Be quiet. Do not fear and do not let your heart be faint. "God is with us" is more than a name. That is the reality in Jesus Christ our Messiah, who has come into the world and who is coming back with a kingdom that is unshakable and will last forever.

If you are here this morning and you would like to know what it is to come to know Jesus and to put your faith in Him and to have your sins forgiven and to enter into Christian life, put your trust in Him. There is a prayer room to the right as you exit the sanctuary. There are people there that would love to pray with you.

If you have a struggle that you are going through, wanting to do things your way and you know that you need to do it God's way and want somebody to pray with you that His power would overcome your unbelief, there are people in the prayer room that will pray for you.

We now go to the Lord. We go to the Lord.