

INITIATION INTO ISAIAH

by

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THEME:

On the black background of Civil War during the reign of Ahaz, Isaiah gives the prophecy concerning the virgin birth of Immanuel and the coming invasion of Judah by Assyria.

REMARKS:

This chapter has become one of the most controversial in Scripture because of the prophecy concerning the virgin birth. Unbelievers have quite naturally discounted it and have sought desperately, but in vain, for a loophole to reject the virgin birth. The battle has been waged about the meaning of the Hebrew word "*almah*," which is translated "**virgin**." See COMMENT on verse 14.

The fact that the angel quotes this prophecy to Joseph, as an explanation for Mary's being with child before her marriage to him, is satisfactory evidence that the prophecy referred to an unmarried woman who had a son by no physical contact with any man. The word used by Matthew in Matthew 1:23 is the Greek word "*parthenos*." This word definitely means an unmarried woman. This should be conclusive as to the meaning of Isaiah 7, and the mind of faith receives it as such. The unbeliever cannot receive it as such, and we should not expect him to, for only the Holy Spirit can take the things of Christ and show them unto us.

YOUNG WOMAN OR VIRGIN?

The word used here is "*almah*." In every instance of its use in the Old Testament it has the meaning virgin— were it translated "*young woman*," as given in the Revised Standard Version, then this would be the one exception, here the translators have rested largely upon the work of Gesenius in his exhaustive Hebrew Lexicon. Now while Gesenius admitted that the common translation of the word is "**virgin**," he said that he changed it to "*young woman*" since he rejected the miraculous, and for one to be born of a virgin had to be a miracle; therefore, his use of the term "*young woman*."

Friends, this is the wrong approach to the Word of God—it is a violation of the prophet. You might disagree with the prophet but you cannot deny him the burden of this statement. It is a point of high interest that this prophecy was literally fulfilled 800 years after its prediction.

In listening to the discussion of a very brilliant Hebrew scholar in the East rather recently, I was much gratified with some of his comments. For example, he said that these translators had missed the point, not having “the feel of the language.” He said there is no cause for confusion even though we find the word “*almah*” used in the case of Rebecca. Let us make this clear by looking at the counterpart in the English today. We will state that a man has three daughters—two married daughters and one girl. Well, are not the two who are married, girls? O yes, they are girls, too, but when you use the word girl as above you mean that she is unmarried and a virgin, that is understood. That is implied in the very language and; if you mean anything else by it, you would have this man to fight. You may be sure of that. The use of the word “girl” here implies that she is a virgin—so it is with the word “*almah*.” its use in every passage in the Old Testament implies virginity.

We would not leave the question of the use of this word “*almah*” without dealing with the testimony of the Septuagint (Greek) translation of the Old Testament which, Gesenius says, was made by 70 outstanding scholars in Alexandria before Christ was born.

Now when they translated this passage from Isaiah from the Hebrew into the Greek, they used the word “*parthenos*” which can only be translated by the word “virgin.” So the Holy Spirit in quoting it in the New Testament made it perfectly clear. Furthermore, the translators of the Revised Standard Version had to use the term “virgin” in their New Testament in order to be consistent with the Greek text. So, my friends, if it is one thing in one place it must be that in the other, for we have here the interpretation of the Holy Spirit.

OUTLINE:

- 1. CIVIL WAR between Judah and Israel with Syria Allied to Israel Resulting in a State of Fear in Judah.** Verses 1-2
- 2. CONDUIT of the Upper Pool Where Isaiah and His Son Shear-jashub Meet Ahaz, King of Judah, With an Encouraging Word From the Lord.** Verses 3-9
- 3. CONFIRMATION by the Sign of the Virgin Birth to the House of David When Ahaz Refuses to Ask for a Sign.** Verses 10-16
- 4. COMING INVASION of the Land of Judah by Assyria Predicted as a Judgment.** Verses 17-25

COMMENT:

Verse 1—**And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it.**

See II Kings 16:2. This prophecy follows the call and commission of Isaiah in chapter six, which took place at the death of Uzziah, Jotham, his son, succeeded him to the throne; and he reigned sixteen years (II Kings 15:32-34), he was a good king as his father Uzziah had been. There was prophecy from Isaiah during his reign evidently. Ahaz, his son, succeeded him: and he did that which was evil.

Verse 2—And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

He could not expect the blessing of God upon him or the nation. As a result, the alliance of Rezin, king of Syria, with Pekah, king of Israel, terrified him and his people.

Verse 3—Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field:

God was not ready to deliver the kingdom of Judah into captivity, and He wanted to encourage the king so he would not make an unwise and frantic alliance with Egypt. The fact that Isaiah was commanded to take his son is suggestive. “**Shear-jashub**” means “*a remnant shall return.*”

The place he was to meet the king is suggestive. The end of the conduit was in the upper pool. This was where it poured its life giving waters for thirsty Jerusalem. This points to the One who was coming as the “**water of life.**”

“**The highway of the fuller's field**” points to the One who is the way! The fuller's field was where garments were washed. There is a place of cleansing for sin. All this is highly symbolic, and it will reward the believing heart to dwell here.

Verse 4—And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.

Verse 5—Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying,

Verse 6—Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal:

Verse 7—Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

Verse 8—For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.

Verse 9—And the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

The tenor of the message was to let Ahaz know that he need not fear the alliance of his two enemies in the north. God had determined their venture a failure.

Verse 10—Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying,

Verse 11—**Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above.**

To strengthen the fabric of the faith of Ahaz, God permitted him to ask for any sign.

Verse 12—**But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.**

His answer reveals that he is a pious fraud. God had demanded that he ask. To refuse was rebellion, not piety.

Verse 13—**And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?**

God insisted that there should be a sign. Now that Ahaz has refused it, the sign will be to the whole house of David.

Verse 14—**Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.**

The sign is to the whole house of David. The word for virgin is the point of controversy. The Hebrew word is "*almah*."

The Revised Standard Version has attempted to rob this word of its full significance here by translating this "young woman." They put in the footnote the word "virgin." This, of course, should be reversed. There may be occasions when this word may be translated "young woman," but not here.

Obviously, it would be no sign if a young woman had a son. That was commonplace. Even if a young woman had a son out of wedlock that would not be so unusual as to become a sign. Obviously, Isaiah intended that the meaning of the word "*almah*" here should be what we understand by the word "**virgin**." It is not only quibbling about words, that is evident in the questioning of this passage, but it is also absolutely insulting to God. (See REMARKS)

Jesus never was called Immanuel. By the virgin birth He fulfilled the meaning of the name, "**God with us**."

Verse 15—**Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.**

Jesus was reared as a poor peasant in Palestine. This was the simple diet of the poor.

Verse 16—**For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.**

This was all fulfilled by the time the Messiah came. It seemed unlikely in Ahaz' day.

Verse 17—The LORD shall bring upon thee, and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria.

Verse 18—And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD, shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

Verse 19—And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.

Verse 20—In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard.

Verse 21—And it shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep;

Verse 22—And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land.

Verse 23—And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, It shall even be for briers and thorns.

Verse 24—With arrows and with bows shall men come thither; because all the land shall become briers and thorns.

Verse 25—And on all hills that shall be digged with the mattock, there shall not come thither the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle.

This is a prophecy that has as its immediate fulfillment the imminent invasion of Judah by Assyria. It looks to the future when again from the north comes another enemy in the last days. (See chapter eight).

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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