

Immanuel: Be Established in Him

Isaiah 7:1-25

Halifax: 3 May 2009

Introduction

In our last sermon from Isaiah,

- we looked at Isaiah 6...
 - that very familiar chapter where Isaiah speaks of the vision he had in the temple where he the LORD high and lifted up and answered His call to go forth as His prophet.
- I showed you that this call did not come to Isaiah until after he had already been serving for several years.
 - Already, he had earnestly called the people to repentance, but they had not heard.
 - You can imagine that Isaiah might have begun to wonder what use there was in his continuance...

So the LORD comes to Him in this vision and tells him to keep on ministering...

- not because the people will respond,
 - but because it is His purpose to actually harden His people through Isaiah's ministry—to harden them as a judgement upon their apostasy...
 - The more Isaiah preaches, the more they would rebel until at last they are reduced to a tenth of what they were.
 - God's glory will be revealed in bringing down His judgement upon them.
 - The holiness that Isaiah saw in the temple will be revealed in His judgements upon the earth.
 - At the same time, God's mercy in pardoning those among the people He pardons will be all the more glorified against the back drop of His holiness.

And now as we move along into chapter 7, we come to a unit in Isaiah's prophecy that continues through chapter 12.

- In these chapters, Isaiah sets forth Christ as the coming Messiah who will appear to bring salvation to God's people despite their wickedness.
 - He sets Him forth as the one who will come despite the failure of Israel's Kings to lead the nation in covenant faithfulness.
 - The house of David is seen to fail miserably and to bring God's judgment down upon the whole nation,

- but it is revealed that God will still bring the Son He promised to David who will redeem His people and gather the nations under Him.
- He is the Son who will rule over God's house forever and ever and the increase of whose government will know no end.

Now in chapter 7, the chapter we are looking at today,

- We have the very familiar prophecy about God's Son...
 - In verse 14, we are told that "the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel."
 - Of course, this is a prophecy about the coming of Jesus Christ as it was given by Isaiah over 700 years before the fact.
 - We are going to look closely at this prophecy,
 - but we are also going to look at the context in which it was given...
- It is given in a context of chastisement.
 - King Ahaz, the King of Judah, had led the nation into idolatry.
 - As God's anointed King, he was responsible for seeing that the nation was faithful to the covenant,
 - but instead, he himself led them into rebellion and sin.
 - And in this chapter we shall see how Isaiah goes to Ahaz to call him to repentance and only makes him worse...
 - Now God had promised to David that if his sons who succeeded him on the throne were to do this, He would surely chasten them...
 - Yet, He also promised that His love would not depart from David and that in time, David's Son (that is, one of his descendents) would be established upon the throne forever and ever.
 - In the keeping of that promise, then,
 - we have God coming to rebellious king Ahaz and calling him to faith...
 - and then upon his rejection of God's call,
 - we have the promise of further chastisement,
 - and at the same time we have an expansion of God's promise to send Christ.
 - As in our previous sermons from Isaiah,
 - I want to look at this passage as it applies to us today who are members of God's covenant people.
 - From this perspective, I want to look at three things...

- First, at God's gracious call that comes to us in times of chastisement
- Second, at the rejection of God's call in times of chastisement
- Third, at the ever prevailing promise of God to provide Christ for us.

I. See how the LORD graciously calls us to faith in times of chastisement.

- This is brought out especially in verses 1-9

A. Here you can see how God sends chastisement upon His people...

1. In these verses we find Ahaz terrified at the threat of Syria and Israel who had joined together against Judah...

a. In verse 2 we are told that he and the people of Judah are trembling...

- Isa 7:2 And it was told to the house of David, saying, "Syria's forces are deployed in Ephraim." So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind.

b. They had good reason to be terrified!

1) These two nations had brought much grief to them in recent days...

- In 2 Chronicles 28, we are told that first the king of Syria and then the king of Israel had come against Ahaz in battle and had defeated him.

- The king of Syria had carried away 200,000 captives...

- And then Israel had slaughtered 120,000 men in their armies...

- And they had killed Maaseiah the king's son, Azrikam his chief officer, and Elkana who was second to the king...

- This is what it says in 2 Chron 28:5-6 concerning Ahaz:

- 2 Chronicles 28:5-6: Therefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria. They defeated him, and carried away a great multitude of them as captives, and brought *them* to Damascus. Then he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who defeated him with a great slaughter. For Pekah the son of Remaliah killed one hundred and twenty thousand in Judah in one day, all valiant men, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, killed Maaseiah the king's son, Azrikam the officer over the house, and Elkanah *who was* second to the king.

- And notice that it says that all this came about because God had sent them against Judah because Judah had forsaken Him!

- That made things even worse because Judah had no reason to expect God to protect them...

2) Now, in Isaiah 7, we are told that these two nations (the Syrians and the Israelites) had united forces to come against Judah!

- It was bad enough when they were separate, but now they were together!
- Up until now, they had not been able to take Jerusalem itself where Ahaz had his seat,
 - but as Isaiah 7:5-6 tells us, this was their goal!
 - They were going to replace Ahaz with some chap called the son of Tabel—a character we know nothing else about!

TRANS> Clearly, Ahaz had good reason to tremble!

- He was reaping the fruits of what he had sown!
 - He was under the chastening hand of the LORD and things were falling apart.
2. Look around my friends, and you will see that it is the same for us today!
- a. We have, in our land and in the church, provoked God to anger!
 - We have slaughtered our own children in the abortion mills—for nothing but preference and convenience...
 - We have refused to exercise justice in punishing criminals—even those who murder...
 - We have given ourselves over to all sorts of adultery and sexual perversion so that our land is unclean...
 - We have turned from the living God to serve idols—rejecting the revelation of God to us and making him to be what we want him to be.
 - Like Ahaz, we have forsaken the God of our Fathers...
 - b. And as a result the LORD has begun to send many evils against us...
 - Our economy is collapsing... we are like a man on his death bed making a last gasp for air...
 - Our land is full of all sorts of social evils—there is depression and suicide, there are broken families and broken marriages, there is despair and aimlessness...
 - Besides all this, the LORD is bringing the Muslims against us—it has been reported that with the current birth rates, it will only be matter of a few decades until they are a majority—we shall be captives in our own land!

TRANS> If we are not trembling, it is probably more on account of ignorance than courage.

- We, like Ahaz, are under God's hand of chastisement,
 - and we have good reason for our hearts to be moved as the trees of the woods are moved by the wind.

B. But look at how God graciously comes to us and calls us to faith in such times!

1. See how He sends His word to Ahaz in the midst of his trembling!

a. In verse 3, we are told that He commands His prophet to go to him...

- Isa 7:3: Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller's Field...
- Now of course Isaiah is the LORD's prophet, so by sending Isaiah, the LORD is sending His word to Ahaz at this time of need...
 - In the very time of his distress!

b. Isn't this marvellous?

1) The LORD knows where Ahaz is and He sees to it that His word comes to Him...

- Even though Ahaz has been so defiant that he has even offered his children in the fire to his idols,
 - Still, the LORD graciously brings His word to Him...

2) This is the way of our gracious LORD...

- No matter what we have done, He continues to bring His message to us to call us back to Himself...
 - He brings a message of comfort and peace if we will only return to Him.
 - In His providence, He sends forth the gospel to those who have hardened themselves against it...
 - He sees that it gets to us.
- How thankful you ought to be for God's word that He brings to you...
 - even when you go astray, He brings His people to you with His Word or He brings His Word to your remembrance.
 - He causes you to know the way that you should go!
- And let us all be Isaiah's as well—
 - those who know our God and are ready to speak for Him to those who are under His chastisement...
 - Are we not commanded in Galatians 6:1:
 - Ga 6:1: Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.
 - It is God's will for us to at least go and try to restore them.

TRANS> And notice further what God tells Isaiah to do...

2. He tells him to bring his son, Shear-Jashub.

a. This little fellow's very name is a promise!

- It means, "A remnant shall return."

1) There is in this name both a threat and a promise.

- The threat is that many in the nation would reject God and His truth so that only a remnant would remain...

- But the promise is that there would be remnant who will be restored to God and who will come to God for blessing.

2) Just as Isaiah was told in chapter 6 when he had his vision of God's holiness...

- A remnant would return to the LORD.

- Isa. 6:8-13: "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here *am* I! Send me." And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' "Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed." Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered: "Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, The land is utterly desolate, The LORD has removed men far away, And the forsaken places *are* many in the midst of the land. But yet a tenth *will be* in it, And will return and be for consuming, As a terebinth tree or as an oak, Whose stump *remains* when it is cut down. So the holy seed *shall be* its stump.""

b. And this marvellous promise is one that has applied through all the ages and continues to apply today!

- There have been times in the history of the church when it looked as if it was all over for the people of God, but a remnant is always saved.

- God, in fact, shows His power and mercy in bringing them out of desperate situations.

1) In this case, the very house of David was burning their children as sacrifices to pagan gods!

- Yet, Shear-Jashub—The remnant will return.

- 2) Likewise, when Jesus was crucified, it was not just a few rebels who saw to it. It was the official God-appointed representatives of His people that commanded it to be done.
 - Yet, Shear-Jashub—The remnant will return.
 - The apostle Paul himself, speaking of the great apostasy of the people in his day, declares, “at this present time, there is a remnant according to election.”
 - There were within the apostate nation those people that were saved by grace, and so it will always be!
- 3) In the days before the reformation, many had turned to idolatry and superstition, even among the leadership of the church...
 - But Shear-Jashub was still there!
 - God did not utterly forsake His people, but continued to preserve a faithful remnant, and so He will always do as long as the world stands.
- c. For Ahaz, that meant that God would not allow Judah to be utterly destroyed so as not to be a people.
 - God’s prophet had come, and Shear-Jashub was with him.
 - Ahaz needed to know that God’s promise to persevere the house of David was as solid as ever.

TRANS> By bringing Shear-Jashub, the LORD is encouraging Ahaz to trust in Him...

- But the encouragement does not stop here...
3. Isaiah counsels Ahaz that he need not fear these two nations.
 - a. To Ahaz, they were invincible in their now combined fury.
 - But to Jehovah, they were nothing but two stubs of smoking firebrands.
 - God had used them to chasten Judah, but now He was through with them.
 - Their flame was about to go out...
 - b. From God’s perspective, there was nothing at all to fear, so Ahaz is basically told to stop fretting.
 - Isa 7:4: and say to him: ‘Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and the son of Remaliah.
 - This is actually a command...a command not to fear!
 - *Take heed* means “to keep” or “to guard” himself.
 - Ahaz was ready to run to the wrong places for help,

- He was actually turning to Assyria for help...
 - and Isaiah says, “keep yourself.”
 - *Be quiet* is the command to compose his mind inwardly.
 - His is agitated within because he is guilty and unable to trust God.
 - Christian, you need to recognise that you are responsible for your thoughts and even your emotions as well as your actions.
 - Misplaced fear, worry, faintheartedness, anxiety, doubt, anger, and so on, are sinful in God’s sight.
 - They are sinful because they are rooted in a lack of trust in God.
 - I do not say that you will not have to wrestle with these—
 - you will have to fight against sin as long as you live...
 - But the point is that you must not think, because these are hard to deal with, that you are not responsible for such sins.
 - As with all sin, you must go to Christ with them and seek His promised grace to help in your time of need.
 - And part of that help is right here in this verse—
 - You overcome fear and anxiety by looking at things from God’s perspective.
 - A federation of powerful nations that has risen up against you is as nothing in His sight.
 - So run to Him in your fear, Take heed and be quiet, do not fear or be faint hearted—God is in control!
 - If He wants to bring chastisement on us, we are to keep on trusting Him and cheerfully submitting to Him.
 - Of course we do not have a specific promise about specific threats that have arisen in our day...
 - Some of them may indeed bring great trouble to our people, even as Syria and Ephraim had already brought great trouble to Ahaz...
 - But let us remember the most important thing—
 - God is in control of all these things and His kingdom will go on... the remnant will return.
 - If we are trusting in Him, we will not be harmed by these things in any way that really matters for eternity.
- c. And do not suppose that the LORD does not understand the situation:

- He makes it perfectly clear that He understands what has made Ahaz afraid.
 - Isaiah 7:5-6: Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying, “Let us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves, and set a king over them, the son of Tabel” —
- In fact, the good news is, your condition is a lot worse than you think it is and God knows that too.
 - God sees you as even more helpless and desperate than you even perceive yourself to be in your time of deepest distress.
 - But He has perfect control of the whole situation!
 - Those who know His name will put their trust in Him!
- Plans to which He is opposed will simply not stand.
 - And it is never God’s plan that the church be utterly destroyed.
 - Therefore, verse 7 says:
 - Isaiah 7:7: thus says the Lord GOD: “It shall not stand, Nor shall it come to pass.”
- It simply won’t happen because God has declared that it won’t happen.
 - His plan for these two nations is stated in verse 8-9.
 - Isaiah 7:8-9: For the head of Syria is Damascus, And the head of Damascus is Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken, So that it will not be a people. The head of Ephraim is Samaria, And the head of Samaria is Remaliah’s son.
 - The idea is that they will not become more than what they are...
 - Neither kingdom will annex Jerusalem.
 - God is through with these smoking fire brands.
 - In fact, in sixty-five years, Israel will not even be a people.
 - And that is exactly what happened.
 - I don’t have time to go into the details, but biblical history shows that Tiglath-Pileser invaded Samaria near to the time that Isaiah spoke.
 - The ten tribes were deported following that.
 - And 65 years from this time, Esar-Haddon completed the deportation and brought in foreigners to populate Samaria.
 - Israel ceased to be a people at that time.

TRANS> So then, God makes it perfectly clear that He is in perfect control of the situation and that Ahaz has nothing to fear from these two nations.

- But of course it is not enough for the LORD to merely tell us these things...we must believe what He has said.
 - See how the LORD, at the end of verse 9, calls Ahaz to believe if he wishes to be established...

C. If you are to be established, you must believe.

1. These are extremely helpful words for us!

- Look at the actual words:
 - Isa 7:9-b “If you will believe, Surely you shall not be established.”
- a. You see what this is saying...
 - We have what God has promised by faith...
 - If we are running around fixing our trust in everything else but God, we will not be able to stand in God in the days to come.
- b. Ahaz was tempted to reject God’s promise in unbelief...
 - He had already set his heart on seeking aid from Assyria against these nations...
 - Instead of believing the LORD and looking to Him for His promised deliverance, he was going to look to Assyria.
 - He was establishing Himself in Assyria.
 - If he does this, then he will not be established in God’s promise.
 - God had promised to establish David’s house forever and He will...
 - but Ahaz will be an unestablished person in this established house.
 - And so will you if you do not believe God’s word.
 - God will still do all that He has promised for His covenant people as a whole,
 - but if you do not believe, you will not be established in what He has promised...
 - You will be cut off because of unbelief.
- c. In the original, the word translated “believe” here is the same root as the word “established.”
 - It means to hold firmly or to hold fast—it is related to the word amen.

- The idea is that you must establish yourself in God now by faith if you want to be established in His promises hereafter!
- If you take hold of the firm ground of His promises and establish yourself in His way now,
 - you will be on firm ground in the days to come as one who is established in His kingdom.
 - If you will not believe, you will not be established.

TRANS> So you see how the LORD graciously comes to us in times of chastisement and calls us to trust in Him.

II. Sadly His call is all too often rejected!

A. Such is the case with Ahaz.

1. The Lord knew that Ahaz was not receiving His words—
 - that he was not believing or establishing himself in His promise...
 - a. But most graciously, the LORD goes a step further and offers him a sign to confirm his faith!
 - Isaiah 7:10-11: Moreover the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above."
 - 1) He offers him anything—any sign at all that would help him to believe!
 - Ahaz can do as Gideon did when God called him to lead Israel against Midian...
 - He can put out his fleece and ask God to keep it dry when the dew falls on the grass all around,
 - and then he can ask Him to do the reverse...
 - 2) Perhaps the Lord offers this in particular because, as far as we know, God had not given Isaiah any signs to confirm his ministry...
 - Here he offers Ahaz a sign so that he will have no reason to doubt that Isaiah has been sent by Him.
 - b. Now realise that for us, the LORD has already given us many signs...
 - The greatest of these is the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day which, for anyone who cares to examine it, is as good proof as could be found.
 - Besides this, He has confirmed the words of the Apostles and prophets with many signs and wonders so that we know that they spoke his word...

- That which is offered to Ahaz is that which we already have.
2. But you see that Ahaz rejects God's offer!
- Look at verse 12
 - Isa 7:12: But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!"
 - a. What disgusting hypocrisy this is!
 - This is the man who offered his children to idols—and he does not want to tempt the LORD?
 - b. This is not the problem at all!
 - It is rather that he does not want to be obligated to follow the LORD!
 - He has already decided to trust in Assyria to take care of Syria and Israel!
 - If the LORD were to give him a sign, he would be obligated to follow Him.
 - This is why unbelievers can be so blind to the obvious...
 - God has clearly revealed His eternal power and divine nature through the things that He has made,
 - but unbelievers don't want to see it because then they will have to follow Him...
 - They avoid looking because they do not want to see evidence of Him.
 - The problem is not lack of evidence, but a wicked heart of unbelief that does not want to know.
 - Jesus said if anyone really wants to know, He will find the truth.
3. All unbelievers are like Ahaz...
- a. They are never established because they go on trusting in things that cannot save them...
 - They embrace lies, false religion, vain distractions, their careers, their pleasures, their learning...
 - anything but God!
 - They are never established because they refuse to believe in the only thing that can establish them.
 - b. But too often it is the case that we as believers also put our trust in things that cannot save...

- We too will distance ourselves from the LORD by our hesitation to go on and do what He calls us to do...
 - be it tithing, chastening our children, having children, submitting to our husbands...
 - If Ahaz had gone on and trusted in the LORD and stopped clinging to Assyria, he would have seen God's hand and been strengthened.
 - You do not get to know God when you will not trust Him.

B. See the dreadful consequences of rejecting God's call!

1. Isaiah answers Ahaz' rejection with a sharp rebuke:

- Isa 7:13: "Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! *Is it* a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also?"
- Several things make this an especially sharp rebuke...
 - a. First, that he addresses him as "the house of David"!
 - This is the house and dynasty that was known for its faithfulness to God!
 - This is the house that was established in the LORD and from whom the Messiah had come.
 - For *this* house to now refuse God was especially heinous...
 - If you have a godly heritage, it is all the worse if you depart from it.
 - b. Second, the rebuke is sharp because he accuses Ahaz of wearying God!
 - It would have been one thing to reject Isaiah's word as a young unconfirmed prophet,
 - But it was a much greater thing to refuse a sign directly from God.
 - This was clearly a problem of obstinate unbelief—not mere uncertainty!
 - There is no excuse for such behaviour!
 - Be careful that you do not make the LORD weary when He calls you so that at last He turns you over to your unbelief!
 - As long as He continues to call you, there is hope, but if you spurn Him to the point of making Him weary,
 - you are left without any hope.
 - Do not presume that the call you hear today will still be heard by you tomorrow if you reject it.
 - c. And see finally that Isaiah puts a sting in this rebuke by refusing to refer to God as the God of Ahaz!

- He now the prophet refers to Him as “my God” instead of “your God” as he did in verse 11.
 - Ahaz is, by his rejection of God’s call, effectively cut off from Him.
2. See the long term consequences of Ahaz’ rejection of the LORD
- a. This rejection is a decisive turning point in history for the house of David.
 - While Syria and Israel will fail as God has said,
 - Isaiah informs Ahaz that the LORD will send Assyria against him and that Assyria will bring trouble the likes of which has not been seen since Judah and Israel had separated.
 - The very place that Ahaz had chosen to put his trust will be the source of the trouble to the house of David!
 - Fathers and husbands,
 - Beware of this—when you reject the way of the LORD, you bring trouble upon your whole household!
 - You are not an island—your sin will greatly affect your posterity for years to come.
 - b. Look at the trouble that Assyria will bring upon the house of David and on Judah because of what Ahaz has done...
 - In verse 17, God shows that Assyria will come and will bring more trouble to them than they have yet seen.
 - v. 18 tells us that at God’s mere whistle, the Assyrians and Egyptians will come like flies and bees to fill the land.
 - In v. 19, we are told that no place will be free of these enemies.
 - In v. 20, we are told that nothing will be left, from the greatest to the least, all will be clean shaven.
 - Like a hungry razor, the Assyrian will take everything.
 - And in v. 21-25, we see that only a few will be left in the land, and these will be destitute of the fruits of the vine and the field.
 - They will be reduced to a diet of curds and honey—things that are not grown by cultivation.
 - The fields and vineyards will be destroyed and they will be forced to live off of what they can find or what a few animals produce.

TRANS> Such is the result of the rejection of God’s call...

- But if the house of David has rejected the LORD and has brought such trouble upon the nation,
 - What are the implications of this as far as God's promise?
 - What has happened to His promise to raise up David's Son to rule over His people forever and to redeem them?
 - How was the remnant to sustain their faith when the very house of David had rejected God's call?

III. See that in spite of what Ahaz has done, God's promise to send Christ still remains!

- No matter what the leaders in the church or in the nation have done, God will still bless His people in Jesus Christ.
- A. Ahaz has rejected a sign from the LORD, but the LORD promises that He Himself will give His people a sign.
- Isa 7:14: Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.
 - Here is the LORD looking at for the faithful remnant to give them a sign that He still has every intention of blessing them!
1. What a wonderful sign this was for the faithful—for those who want to be encouraged!
 - a. Here the LORD is assuring His people that He is still going to send them the child He has promised from ancient times—
 - The Son who will save the world...
 - Just as He had promised from the very beginning...
 - To Eve,
 - when He told her that the woman would bear a child who would crush the serpent's head...
 - To Abraham,
 - when He told him that a special child would come from him in whom both he and all the nations of the earth would be blessed...
 - To David,
 - when He told him that he would have a son who would be established on the throne forever and ever.
 - b. All along this promised child had been sought...
 - Eve and the faithful women after had longed to bring forth this child of promise...

- And now God is telling His people in Isaiah's day that not even the apostasy he has found in the very house of David will overthrow His promise to the house of David.
 - Christ will still come to bless them.
2. And here in the midst of this terrible apostasy, the LORD reveals something very remarkable about this child that He had not revealed before.
- He actually uses the wicked response of Ahaz to confirm His promise and make it all the more complete!
 - Such is the way of our gracious LORD!
 - a. See here, He tells His people that the child He is sending will be called Immanuel...
 - The name Immanuel means "God with us."
 - He will actually be someone you can point to and say,
 - "Do you see Him, He is God with us."
 - There were many great men in Israel that God was with...
 - But this promised one will Himself be God with them.
 - "In His person," God says, "I will actually be with you, as one of you, dwelling among you."
 - Now the people in Isaiah's day couldn't understand just how all this could be, but they knew that somehow,
 - in this promised child,
 - God was going to be with them in some extra-ordinary, up-until-now unprecedented way.
 - Isaiah develops this even more in chapter 8 and 9 when he speaks further about Immanuel and his God-like characteristics.
 - By this they knew that God still loved them and was committed to do for them all that He had spoken!
 - In no way was He through with them—
 - He was leading them into something far more grand and glorious than He had yet brought them to.
 - b. And further, the LORD tells them that this promised child will be born of a virgin!
 - 1) This had not yet been told, but this would be a mark that would distinguish Him from all others!
 - A virgin would conceive and bear a son.

- The word that is used here in the original is '*almah*.
 - This word refers to a woman who is old enough to marry and bear children, but it is *never* used to refer to a married woman.
- 2) Some commentators have made much of the fact that it does not necessarily refer to a virgin and have insisted that it should be translated young woman.
- But this completely misses the point.
 - If this woman is not a virgin, then she is an immoral woman who conceives a bastard.
 - Why would an illegitimate birth be given by God as a sign to His people?
 - How would such a birth be a sign of anything?
 - The best translation of this word is virgin.
 - That is how the Jews translated it in the Septuagint...
 - they used a the Greek word that means virgin—and that is how we should translate it.
 - God is giving His people a sign.
 - There was no more suitable word in Hebrew that could have been chosen to refer to a virgin than *almah*.

TRANS> Because this child is Immanuel, He comes into the world in an extraordinary way.

c. Isaiah also shows us something else about this child.

- 1) In verse 15, he indicates that this child will be born in affliction—
- Here he says that the child will eat curds and honey...
 - We have already seen in verse 21-22 that this is the diet of those who are under chastisement in a desolate land.
 - This indicates that when the Messiah comes, the house of David will still not be restored.
 - The Messiah himself will not be feasting on wine and grain,
 - but forced to eat the food that can be found in the dessert.
 - Such was the case as the young child had to be taken to Egypt with his parents to escape the threat of Herod.
 - He was not born in a palace but in a manger, and then had to flee from his enemies until at last He was crucified.

- 2) This shows that the trouble that Ahaz brought to the house of David would continue until the coming of the Messiah...
 - and that it would even be trouble that He Himself would have to bear.
 - Being thus brought up in affliction,
 - he would have to learn obedience through suffering as His father David had done.
 - He would prove Himself through faithfulness in sufferings and afflictions of every kind.
 - Isaiah will yet have much more to say about the Messiah's sufferings—but here we are given an introduction to the idea.
- 3) This would be an antidote to discouragement...
 - Over the years when the house of David was not restored to its former glory,
 - many might be tempted to question how the Messiah could come.
 - In fact, the lack of earthly glory was a stumbling block to many in Israel...
 - but it did not need to be—for the LORD had foretold it.

TRANS> So this is the sign that God gives to His faithful people to encourage them He has not forsaken them even though He has forsaken Ahaz.

B. Now I want you to consider how this sign was and is a benefit to God's people!

1. First, how it was an encouragement to the remnant in Isaiah's day when it was a sign that would not be fulfilled for 700 years!
 - a. I mean, if Ahaz had asked for a sign to confirm what Isaiah was saying about Syria and Ephraim, it would not have been a sign like this!
 - He would have had some miracle like Gideon had ask for—something to confirm that Isaiah was speaking the truth...
 - But the LORD is not really providing a sign for that purpose to Ahaz...
 - b. The purpose of this sign is to encourage the remnant who were already trusting in God's promise...
 - but who might have been discouraged and unsure what God would do now that the house of David had rejected Him...
 - How could the LORD fulfill His promise to the send the Messiah through David when David's house had rejected Him?
 - The purpose of the sign is to show that God's promise was still God.

- It was to show them that God's promise was even greater than they had yet been told!
 - It was not that they now needed to see the virgin conceive—
 - it was that they needed to know that God was still going to bless them by sending the Messiah.
 - It would comfort them even when things got worse...
 - even when at last the house of David and all Judah were brought into captivity...
 - They would have this assurance that God has reconfirmed His promise to raise up a Son to David,
 - and that this son would be none other than Immanuel.
2. How much more should this promise of a sign be an encouragement to you who now live under the New Covenant!
- a. You have seen the fulfillment of this promise!
 - Now you know that God the Son actually did come to be born of a virgin!
 - You know that He came to break down all the barriers that sin has brought between God and His elect people.
 - You know that in order to remove those barriers, He went to the cross as our representative to bear the wrath and curse of God for us.
 - You know that He also poured out His Spirit on us to deliver us from our obstinacy and to establish us as God's people.
 - b. So now the question is this—
 - How can you ever question His love?
 - 1) What wickedness can His covenant people do that can ever undo His purpose concerning His elect?
 - 2) What chastisement could ever be so great that it could cause you to question His love and commitment to save us?
 - 3) What legitimate reason could there ever be for you to turn to Assyria
 - Your God has proven His love to you!
 - If He raises up Muslims or causes our economy to collapse,
 - it does not change His promise to us as His people one iota!
 - Do not become agitated like a tree shaken by the wind!
 - Do not run around looking for a Saviour of some kind as if you do not have one!
 - Your LORD has not changed in His purpose concerning you...

- Trust Him and do not be afraid...
 - Be established in Immanuel and you will be established forever!
 - Be firm in Him and you will be firm.

- Every day you are establishing yourself—fixing yourself—in something...
 - Is it in Assyria who destroys, or in the Lord who saves?