

Allan MacRae, Isaiah 7-12: Lecture 1

This is lecture 1 given by Dr. Allan MacRae at Biblical Theological Seminary on Isaiah chapters 7-12:

There probably are more chapters that have references to Christ between chapters seven and twelve of Isaiah than in just about any other section of the Old Testament. (That is, in the consecutive chapters.) However, not every one of these predictions is one which is obvious when you first see it, and there are various problems that have been raised about each of them. So we will want to look at the messianic prophecies in chapters seven to twelve to see how they relate to the passages around them, to see exactly whether and how the New Testament writer was justified in quoting them in connection with Christ. We also want to note the other passages between seven and twelve, some of which have very important lessons for us. That will take us maybe half the semester because this is an extremely important section of Isaiah.

Then, the other part of this semester we are going to take chapters 28 to 35 and if Isaiah 7-12 is one of the best-known sections in the New Testament, then 28 to 35 is probably the least known. There are many individual verses there that have passed into our language as quotes of individual verses or parts of verses, but very few people know much about chapters 28 to 35 and the reason is quite simple to see. If you will start reading at the beginning of chapter 28, almost anyone reading 28 will get through and have no idea what he has read. Chapter 29 is almost as bad. At first they do not convey any continuous idea of something definite, but I have found that if you take the principles and facts that are brought out in connection with chapters 7 to 12 and have them in mind as you approach 28 to 35, it opens right up. It's like taking a light into a dark room. And consequently, after doing chapters 7 to 12 we will then be able quite easily to see the main purposes of chapters 28- 35. And once we get those main purposes, we will notice many little details that I think are of great interest. So chapters 28 to 35, while not as outstanding as section 7 to 12, is a very interesting section and has some very important

teachings in it. But I think they will be much easier to understand after we have made a careful examination of chapters 7 to 12.

Now I have picked up a book here at the University of Pennsylvania Library called *Isaiah on the Assyrian Crisis*, by a professor at Yale Divinity School, Professor Childs. I noticed in the book that he takes up certain sections of Isaiah that we will look at a little later in the course (not at the beginning of the course). But he looks at these sections, and he says that we have to recognize that this particular section is made up of two different sources; you have three verses from this one, then two from that one, and one from this, and two from that. The question becomes which of the two sources is correct? The whole approach is that we can take this ancient document and we can determine when it was written and why it was written. We can determine that some parts were written very early, and some parts were very late, and we can evaluate just how much truth there is in it. Now that is what is called the higher criticism. We are not dealing in this course with the higher criticism but we have to say just a few words about it as we begin. You will pick up almost any book on biblical introduction, and you are apt to find this statement in it: that the term higher criticism does not involve in it anything that is harmful. Higher criticism, they say, is simply the regular practice of examining a document to see what its sources are, what its unity is, and so on, and you will read that statement in almost any book on the biblical introduction. But if you want to read a book on the study of any other literature than the Bible, you won't find any such statement, at least not in a book that has been written within the last fifty years. It is a strange thing: Often religious students hold back from a theory and oppose the theory, and think it is bad and stick to what they used to have, but then they come to accept the theory and they take over a view from secular study, while then the secular studies have long since abandoned it. So the religious studies keep on using views and attitudes that are quite out of date.

Here's the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*. I noticed an article in it about a New Testament problem. The author began by saying that, when we compare a statement quoted from Jesus in Matthew, in Mark, and in Luke, we notice differences. And we must try to decide: What did Jesus actually say? And how much was the

interpretation of the writer? And so that is the first problem, the author says. Now he says that since Mark is the first gospel, Mark is probably right, and Matthew and Luke, probably out of their own ideas, added a certain things. That is another application of the so-called “higher criticism.” I read a statement recently that it is strange that the great bulk of evangelical scholars today strongly repudiate the higher criticism of the Pentateuch, because it has been a central focus point of attack on the Scripture, while all liberals believe thoroughly in the higher criticism of the Pentateuch. Yet while most evangelical scholars repudiate that, yet many of these same evangelical scholars accept that same approach in dealing with the gospels. They say we have Matthew, Mark and Luke. Mark was doubtless the first gospel, and then the others used Mark as a source. And then they had another source they called Q, and they fit together from these sources, they say we want to try to get back to the original underlying source.

In this particular article I looked at here in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, the man is one who believes in the Bible and his conclusion in the end is in line with the acceptance of the Scripture. But in reaching that, he takes the method of comparing these gospels to see which one is nearer the truth, and which presents us with simply the ideas of the later writer. He talks a good deal about the *sitz im leben*, or situation in life, of each passage—a German phrase, which is much used by theological scholars. I think if they would simply say “the background,” it would be an English word, and it would give exactly the same idea and be simpler for most people to understand what it is—but this is something you will have to meet in reading and studying about most parts of the Bible.

I think that very few evangelical scholars realize the fact which I discovered, to my great surprise, a few years ago when I decided to look into the application of the principles of higher criticism to secular literature. And I found that this term “higher criticism” began in the 1700s, and by 1800 there was a widespread attitude that any ancient document is legendary or imaginary unless you can find supporting proof of it. Shortly after 1800, a custom began, which continued until early in this century, of taking any ancient document, and even some that were fairly recent, and thinking that we can

take the document and decide how much came from one source and what came from a second source and what from a third and so on.

But today in literary study aside from the Bible, that method has been just about completely abandoned. I read one book by a professor in Bennington College, a book on general literature. I looked in the index to see what he had to say about the higher criticism and I found that in the whole book on literary criticism, there was only one reference to higher criticism. It was a reference to the almost miraculous way in which students of the Bible have been able to separate out sources. Almost miraculous, he said, because he recognized, as I believe practically all students of general literature recognize, that in the first place, no great classic has ever been written by a lot of sources coming together. A man may have sources for knowledge, but if it's a great work, it must have a great author. The author puts it through his mind, through his thinking, and he writes it and it is his writing. They recognize that most great works were not made up of sources. They recognize, still more importantly, that even if they were made up of sources, we would not be able to figure them out now.

I read a statement about one of the great religious works of India, of the Hindu. The author said that there is no question that this great extensive work began with a small part and has had many accretions to it; there were many sources. But scholars of it agree that it is impossible to distinguish what the sources were. Yet even today, people are writing about the book of Isaiah and saying that these five words came from Isaiah, and these next twenty words were written a hundred years before Isaiah, and the next three verses were written three hundred years after Isaiah, and they think they can figure out the sources like that. Personally, I don't think there's any point in our trying to take up their arguments in detail and answer them. I think it is good for us to recognize that it is a method that has been proven false in general study and is not used in other studies, and that the way it is used by all liberal biblical scholars today, is simply clinging to something that is out of date. Well, our attitude in this course is that the book of Isaiah and all the rest of the Bible is what God wants us to have.

Now if it says that Jesus said something in Matthew, and if it says that he said something different in Mark, I believe that we can say that they both represent the thought that Jesus was giving. But that when it comes to the exact words, I don't believe one particular gospel represents the totality of what Jesus exactly said. In fact, I don't believe he said a single English word in his whole life. So, I don't think that any of our translations represent exactly what he said. He may have spoken in Greek, but we can't prove he did. We know that most of what he said was doubtless in Aramaic. Two translations of Aramaic into Greek may both be good representations of part of what he said. You don't have to quote everything a man says when you refer to something about it. You only record particular parts. They may both be correct representations of what he said as near as you can get in a translation. So you may have to compare them in order to get a closer idea of exactly what his original thought was. But if we have any sentence in any language, we have to look at it and study it in relation to other statements elsewhere to find out what the thought is, because no statement in any language can stand absolutely by itself. So we are interested in determining what these words mean, and we may have differences of opinion as to what they mean. But what we find in the manuscript that God has caused to be passed down to us is what we can depend on as the inerrant Word of God, though not in any one translation a precise statement of God's inerrant teaching.

It's good to have that in mind as our approach. But do not expect to go into arguments about the first, second, or third Isaiah, or that sort of thing. Most of the material we are going to look at in this course, the critics assigned to the first Isaiah, although many parts of it they assign to any one of the other three or four writers that they think might have participated in the production of this book.

Now the seventh chapter of Isaiah with which we begin is probably best known to Christians because of the predictions of the virgin birth. I haven't heard a great deal of argument in recent years about the virgin birth. Now, I don't know just why that is, because when I was in college it was one of the big discussion points. Was Jesus virgin born? Some have claimed to accept the biblical teachings about Jesus but they did not

believe in the virgin birth. I think to the liberals it's just an absurd idea and to most evangelicals it is simply what the Scripture says and we accept it as truth. We did have a bit of argument in relation to it when the Revised Standard Version came up because the Revised Standard Version in Isaiah 7 says, "Behold a young woman will give birth." Now there's nothing miraculous or strange about that, but that's the way they translate it. An argument can be made about the meaning of the word, whether it means "virgin" or not. I think it definitely does mean "virgin," but we need to look at it, to look at the evidence, and an argument can be made for it to mean "young woman." But the thing that makes it really bad in my opinion is that the Revised Standard Version in Matthew quotes Isaiah as saying that "a *virgin* shall conceive and bring forth, and you shall call his name Emmanuel," and then has a footnote and points you back to Isaiah, where they translated "virgin," as "a young woman." That's why I said when the version came out that I thought the version had a lie right on its cover, because it says Holy Bible on its cover, and a Holy Bible would not contain such a sharp contradiction as that, saying in that New Testament this was a fulfillment of the Old Testament, and then stating in the Old Testament something entirely different from the quotation contained in the New Testament. Now the Revised Standard Version did that in most of the messianic passages. When you get away from the messianic passages, the version is really a very good translation; they were excellent scholars who made it. So as long as there's no doctrinal issue involved you can trust it as a rule. But the translators had a complete distaste for the idea that the Old Testament ever predicted Christ, and even where the words are absolutely clear in the Old Testament, they may change it around in the Old Testament. But as they say, the worst part of it is that they, in the New Testament, refer back to the Old Testament, so that anybody reading the New Testament sees 15 or 20 cases where the New Testament writer says this fulfills the Old Testament, yet finds something utterly different in the Old Testament.

How can a Holy Bible have such contradictions in it as that? Well, I would like to call your attention to Matthew 1:22, and I believe that there is an unfortunate thing in all the recent translations of this passage. Now that word "recent" needs to be slightly

modified, because there was a translation that appeared in England in 1881 and in the United States in 1901, which was widely acclaimed and much used between that time and the time when the Revised Standard Version came out. In England, it was called the Revised Version, and in America it was called the American Standard Version. It differed on Matthew 1:22 from all the recent translations I have seen, and I don't know whether the translators of the New American Standard Bible and of the New International Version failed to give consideration to the reading of the American Standard Version, or whether they rejected it. I don't know which was the case. But I call your attention to Matthew the first chapter. In the first chapter of Matthew, we read about the birth of Christ, and we read beginning with verse 18 in the New International Version that,

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph but before they came together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man, and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said...

Then there's a quotation mark. Now in the recent translations, they all have quotation marks at this point. But the King James has no quotation marks here, and the American Standard in 1901 had no quotation marks in it, and the original Greek had no quotation marks in it.

So this, you might say, is a paraphrase. A paraphrase is an attempt to give, in your language, what is in the original, even though there's no indication of it there. The Living Bible by Kenneth Taylor, now, that is a paraphrase. It doesn't claim to be anything but a paraphrase. It looks like the original and those men see what they think the original means and then they put that into English. Many people find it much easier to get an idea of what the Bible is teaching through reading that paraphrase. But when it comes to the exact study of verses, they do not exactly correspond with the original because it's a paraphrase from English to English and not a translation directly from the Greek and Hebrew. Now no translation exactly corresponds to the original. If it did exactly correspond, it wouldn't make sense, because no two languages are similar enough that

you can make an absolute word-for-word translation. But in a translation instead of a paraphrase, we try, where the original is a little ambiguous, to maintain that ambiguity, because most sentences in any language have some ambiguity and vagueness in them. We try to retain that rather than to make a decision. Now, if we make a decision which is still rather close to one of two possibilities, we can call it a translation, but if we change our wording quite a bit, introducing something there to make clear what we think is in the original, there is an element of paraphrase. So there's an element of that in every translation. When writing something for modern time, it's good to put in quotation marks; but we must remember that those quotes represent only the judgment of the translators. Now, in this passage there's no question that if you're going to use quotation marks this is where they should begin, after the word "said." So we have,

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sin."

Then there is another quotation mark. That quotation mark represents the judgment of those who have prepared most of the recent translations, but it differs from the judgment of those who made the American Standard version in 1901 and the English Revised in 1881. They did not put the end of the quotation there. See, your next verse says, without a quotation,

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet.

Then you have a quotation mark again, as quoting from the Old Testament,

"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel," which means, 'God with us.' When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him.

So Joseph accepted this unbelievable thing, that this child was virgin born; that Mary was not simply a loose woman. Before the last war, there were those in Germany, as they were trying to raise the Nazi teaching, who tried to praise Jesus and hate all Jews, who

said he was the son of a German soldier in Palestine at the time. Anti-Christians sometimes make such statements. Well, what would Joseph think when this woman, with whom he had not yet had relation, was pregnant? What would he think? Well now, if you find your wife in that situation, when you first marry her, and you have a dream where an angel says to you, “Oh, don’t you worry, the Holy Spirit did this,” you know, I think most of us would say, “Well, I wonder what I ate for supper last night that produced that odd idea in my head.”

To me, the nub of the whole thing is that the angel who talked to Joseph did *not* stop with the words “call his name Jesus because he will save his people from their sin,” but that the next verse is part of what the angel said. So the American Standard Version continues the quote, “...Now all this is come to pass that it might be fulfilled.”

You may say to Joseph, “This is a weird thing. You can’t believe such a thing. How do you know this isn’t some demon talking to you? Dreams can be from demons; the Bible warns us against dreams we are not sure come from the Lord.” Joseph wasn’t a prophet. God had not given him messages. How could he simply trust a dream that he saw an angel who said that? But, the angel gives him proof! He says this is what God had predicted. And so the angel says that, “this is come to pass that it might be fulfilled.” Your end quotation should be after this.

Furthermore, to me, another proof of this is that if this was Matthew’s idea, as is thought by most present-day interpreters, I think Matthew would have put the end-quote after Joseph woke up. In view of what the angel had said, he headed away from there, and took Mary with him and had no union with her until she gave birth to a son and gave him the name Jesus. After that, it would have said, “Now this happened in order to fulfill . . .” I can’t quite think that Matthew would have put the end-quote right in the middle of the incident instead of at the end.

But, the big argument in it to me is that it is the solid basis for convincing Joseph that this was indeed a virgin birth. As you read it in the New International, it says, *All this took place to fulfill...* and of course the angel wouldn’t say, “*All this took place*”. The angel would say, “*All this has taken place to fulfill . . .*” But this is a distinction we have

in the English, which you would hardly have in the Greek. The Greek perfect represents something that has already occurred that has results reaching in to the present. So either translation fits with the Greek perfect. Now, I reached this conclusion a few years ago, but it was only in the last week that I learned that Irenaeus presented the same idea back in the second or third century AD, and that there have been great students like Professor Zahn, Theodore Zahn, who Harnack said was one of the greatest minds of the nineteenth century and who wrote many commentaries on the Bible, that presented this as his conclusion. It is not the generally accepted view of these verses. But whether this is what the angel said or whether it was what Matthew said, it's certainly what is taught in this chapter here: that the virgin birth is the fulfillment of these words in Isaiah. And so it is important that we see whether the angel or Matthew or whoever was completely wrong in thus interpreting Isaiah, as all of the liberals feel. Some say that, in the Old Testament, this was Isaiah speaking to Ahaz in a great crisis. In this crisis, he was giving Ahaz comfort. Well, how would it be any comfort to Ahaz to know Jesus would be born 700 years later? How would that bring comfort to Ahaz? Then there is a great problem about the relation of the verse to the next verse.

So this is not one of the simplest matters of the Scripture, but it is I believe a very important matter. However, to understand Isaiah 7-12, you have to have the *sitz im leben* or background situation in mind. The historical background is very important here. It is obviously important because there are so many references to it in the chapter. So, before we go on with a careful examination of the contents of this chapter, we want to look at a few important things about the historical background.

As to the historic background, I want to mention four nations because these nations are very important in connection with the whole passage. I'll principally mention matters related to the history of these nations. Many of you may be completely familiar with these because they are vital to the backbone of all Old Testament study, but I want to take a few minutes to make sure they are quite clear. Now, the kingdom of Israel was established by Saul, was ruled over by David and by Solomon, and then was broken into two parts. The Southern Kingdom we often speak of, took the name the kingdom of

Judah, while the Northern Kingdom composed of ten tribes kept the name Israel. Once the Northern Kingdom, Israel, disappeared then the Southern Kingdom, Judah, was then called Israel because they all considered themselves Israelites. But the smaller kingdom took the name Judah after the one tribe of which it was made up, with a few fragments of other tribes, while the ten tribes, the so-called northern kingdom, included the territory to the north and most of the territory across the Jordan, even reaching clear south of most of Judah. Judah existed from about 975 B.C. to 587 B.C. I said about 975 B.C. because we do not know exactly when Solomon died. There's no statement in the Scripture anywhere that Solomon died in 975 BC. There is no such date. The system of dating from the birth of Christ only began in the fifth century AD. And so all dates before that that are in numbers represent an attempt to figure them out. We have no documents with any such dates prior to the fifth century AD and there are no dates, specifically in the Bible, in our system of figuring. So when it comes to knowing when Solomon died, dates that far back we do not have sufficient evidence in most cases to do more than make a guess on. In some we can get quite close and others not so close.

Now when you get to the end of the kingdom of Judah, 587 B.C., Judah was conquered by the Babylonians which left us rather full records of the event. We have sufficient materials from Babylonia and from Assyria that where we have contact with them, so we can establish the date rather closely with one exception. You notice I said 587 B.C. and you will sometimes hear that Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C.; the reason is that the idea of when you are going to start the year is purely an arbitrary matter. We start the year on January 1st, but the Papal authorities in the middle ages always started their year at Christmas time. So if you'll find a medieval record from Rome, that gives you a date of, say 1122, and it's in the last 5 days of December, you don't know whether it was figured by some pagan, who began the year at January, or whether it was figured by a man who said, "the year should of course begin with the birth of Christ," so 1122 would be the start of a new year instead of the old one if it was in the last 5 days of December. It is an arbitrary matter of when you're going to start the year. Actually it is evident in what we call some of our months. September, from the Latin

word *seventh month*, is actually the ninth month of our year, because the Romans originally started their year with March. October, like octagon an eight sided figure, which means *eighth month* in Latin, we call the tenth month. December means *tenth month* but it is the twelfth month of our calendar. So we don't know just what month Jerusalem was conquered; nobody will ever say it was 588 B.C., I don't believe, and nobody will ever say it was 585 B.C. But whether it was 587 or 586, there's no way of proving. We don't know what the exact date was, and we don't know exactly how they started their calendar. So in any Old Testament date, there's always a possibility of it being one year off. But when you get back to the time of Solomon, we're not near so sure and there are certain other things that we're not so sure of the date. So now, this kingdom of Judah lasted until 587 B.C. when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians and after the Northern kingdom, Israel, was destroyed in 722 B.C. by the Assyrians, they called Judah the kingdom of Israel.

Just as Judah was the largest tribe in the southern kingdom (in fact most of the southern kingdom), in the northern kingdom, the largest tribe was the tribe of Ephraim and often they referred to the northern kingdom not as Israel, but as Ephraim. Sometimes they referred to it by mentioning its capital city of Samaria, just as the capital city of the southern kingdom was Jerusalem. About 975 B.C., Solomon's kingdom was divided in two, and lasted up to 722 or 721 B.C. Now under that, I have written the name of one of their kings, Pekah, son of Remaliah; he is mentioned by name in this chapter so I want to mention him here. After him, the king that followed is Hoshea, who reigned from 731 to 722 or 721 B.C. Hoshea killed Pekah. He was not his son; he was not a legitimate successor. These dates, 722/721 B.C., we know from Assyrian records of the conquest of Samaria. Hoshea, the Bible tells us, reigned 9 years, so we can be sure of his date.

Most readers of the King James Version would find utterly strange, the name Aram; because in the King James Version, always says Syria rather than Aram. But in fact there was a people called the Arameans and there were a number of various Aramean kingdoms, but the most important of them, the one with which we are concerned with now, had its capital at Damascus. That kingdom, which was northeast of the kingdom of

Israel with its capital at Damascus, called itself Aram and is called Aram in the Hebrew Bible. But later on the Assyrians conquered it, and then still later, when people from the west came into this region, they called it Assyri and then shortened it to Syri. So to say Syria today for that area is a complete anachronism; the word didn't even exist then. It is a shortening of the word Assyria, but it is used in the King James Version consistently to refer to what they themselves called Aram. The New International Version, and I believe most recent translations, take the word directly from the Hebrew instead of changing it into what that area later came to be called that is modern day Syria.

So Aram or Syria was a power which generally was stronger than the Kingdom of Israel. During most of the history of the Kingdom of Israel there were periods when Israel had conflict and wars with the people of Aram, with their headquarters at Damascus. I mention on your sheet Aram's last King Rezin, who reigned from 740-732 B.C. Now Rezin is mentioned in our chapter Isaiah 7, so I mention him here. The Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Aram were conquered by the Empire of Assyria which had its capital in the northern part of Mesopotamia on the Tigris River at Nineveh. Nineveh was destroyed in 612 B.C. While Nineveh was destroyed in 612 yet the Assyrians fought on and finally were completely ended as a kingdom in 605 B.C.

Now that's getting beyond the date we're concerned with in our present history, but we want to have those dates in mind in general. Now let us quickly look at the general facts of Isaiah 7. We know mostly the beginning of the historical background of it, mentioned in chapter 7 verse 1 and verses 5-6, but it is more fully given in 2 Kings 16. If you look at 2 King 16 you'll find there that in 2 King 16, verses 1 through 4 tell you about King Ahaz, the king of Judah, and he seems to be a thoroughly disagreeable and ungodly man. Then in verses 5-6 in chapter sixteen of 2 Kings you read,

Then Rezin King of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah King of Israel marched up to fight against Jerusalem and besieged Ahaz, but they could not overpower him. At that time, Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath for Aram by driving out the men of Judah.

Elath lies at the head of the Red Sea on the eastern side of the Sinai peninsula. It's nearer to the territory of Israel than Judah even though it's further south from Judah. Then in verse 7 we read what is one of the most important things in our present study of chapter 7 of Isaiah. In 2 Kings 16:7,

Ahaz sent messengers to say to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, "I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are attacking me". And Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the temple of the Lord and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria complied by attacking Damascus and capturing it. He deported its inhabitants to Kir and put Rezin to death."

Now that is the background of Isaiah 7. In Isaiah 7 we read at the beginning,

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.

As we read in 2 Kings they made an attempt to conquer it, and then they withdrew and we read in verse 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.

They were very upset because they understood that it wasn't only the kingdom of Israel attacking them, which was much larger than the kingdom of Judah and had maybe three times as much territory and maybe twice as many people, but that also the kingdom of Aram beyond Israel, which was larger than Israel, was joining with Israel to attack. What could they do with such an attack as that? How could they ever think they would be able to resist it? And so we read, "*the heart of Ahaz and his people were shaken, as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind.*" What should they do in this case? And we noticed in 2 Kings that Ahaz thought of a clever way to get around it. He thought, I must get my people to fight hard to resist the attack of these people, but in the meantime I will secretly send to the king of Assyria way over across the desert to the east beyond them and I will

send him a great amount gold and tell him I am ready to be subject to him and ask him to come and deliver me from him. The king of Assyria was always ready to do that. The king of Assyria had been, for years, conquering nation after nation around them. But Isaiah goes to Ahaz and warns him. Isaiah says, “Trust the Lord, the Lord can protect you,” and the Lord did protect Judah and Judah lasted for another nearly 150 years, although Israel would be destroyed by the kingdom of Assyria within ten years in 721 B.C. Isaiah warned Ahaz not to use human insufficient methods to gain protection here. *You do away with these powers in between and you’ll have Assyria right next to you, and you’ll be in far greater danger than you are now. Trust the Lord.* That is Isaiah’s message to Ahaz.

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