

## Allan MacRae, Isaiah 7-12 Lecture 2

This is lecture 2 delivered by Dr. Allan MacRae at Biblical Theological Seminary on Isaiah 7-12:

One thing I want to mention again, because many Christians are easily confused about it, is the difference between Syria and Assyria. In the times of the Bible there was no such place as Syria. There was a great empire, a long distance from Israel, that was called Assyria located in northern Mesopotamia on the Tigris River. It's named after the god Ashur, and this empire became very aggressive, conquered many other nations, and eventually conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722/721 B.C. Just before it conquered Israel, it conquered a country called Aram, and the word Aram occurs a great deal in the Old Testament. Aram was an important competitor of Israel which is located where Syria is today and the capital was Damascus. It is adjacent to Israel to the north east and just east of modern day Lebanon. After Assyria conquered Aram and held it for a long time, the Assyrian empire was conquered by the Babylonians and then by the Persian Empire. Later Alexander the Great defeated the Persian Empire. The first part of the Assyrian empire the Greeks entered was the old Aram, so they called it Syria. And so ever since 300 BC, the region north of Palestine and extending east of there, with its headquarters in Damascus, has been called Syria, as it is called today. The King James Version substituted our modern name Syria. Most of the modern translations put the Hebrew as it is, Aram. I wanted to be sure that that was clear to all of you. I think it was already to most.

There were a number of you that I asked, "What was the crisis that came at the beginning of King Ahaz's reign in Judah?" One sentence would have been quite sufficient to tell that the crisis was when Israel and Aram united to try to remove him and to put in a puppet king, as we find in the beginning of Isaiah; that is, to put the son of Tabeel in his place. Now most of you did not mention the son of Tabeel, the attempt to put in the puppet king. But practically everyone had the

crisis right and a good many went on to tell about what he did and what followed. The important thing to us there is what his response was. That is very important. Many of you mentioned that but that wasn't part of the original question.

Now today I have three things in particular with which I wish to deal with. The first of those is to look at the historical event behind Isaiah 7 and Isaiah's response. We already looked at this to some extent last time; I want to look a little further at it now. We are dealing with the seventh chapter of Isaiah, a chapter which is of a tremendous importance to Christians because it contains that wonderful prophecy of the virgin birth. But the chapter begins when Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Azariah, was king of Judah; King Rezin of Aram, and King Pekah son of Remaliah of Israel, marched up to fight against Jerusalem. But they could not overpower it. Now, the house of David in Judah was told, "Aram has aligned itself with Ephraim." They knew that an attack from Israel was a tremendous danger. But here, Israel has Aram also united with it. So we read, "The hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind." Now Isaiah does not go on to tell what Ahaz did then. I believe that what Ahaz did, he did secretly. We are told about it in 2 Kings 16. I believe he did it in such a way that only his leading nobles would realize what he had done. We read there in verse 7 that Ahaz sent messengers to say to Tiglath-pilezer, King of Assyria, "I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and the king of Israel who are attacking me. And Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the temple of the Lord." That would be the treasure, of course, that he found in the temple of the Lord and in the treasury of the royal palace that he now gave as a gift to the king of Assyria. So here we have Jerusalem having been attacked and the attack repulsed.

Then they hear that the attack, which was made hastily and was not well-prepared and which did not succeed, was one which had come from two nations, both of which were larger and stronger than Judah. So it is no wonder that their hearts were shaken like the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind. In that

situation, Ahaz has sent this great sum of money across the desert way over to Assyria to the king of Assyria, and Ahaz says, “Come and deliver me from these two nations that are attacking.”

In that situation Isaiah goes to him with a message and the message is this: “God is able to protect you. God has promised that he will protect his people if they will be true to Him. And you can trust God to protect you. But if you follow this clever human scheme of yours, of bringing in this wicked king of Assyria in order to protect you from them, you will remove the buffer states in-between and be right next to Assyria, and be in far greater danger than you are now.” That is the message that Isaiah sent to him.

I used to find this passage very appropriate back in the days when the United States was considering uniting with Russia in order to defeat central Europe. I felt then that if we united with Russia instead of simply preventing Russia from being overrun, the result would be that we would be faced by Russia just the way that Judah would be faced by Assyria in this case. I think history has proved that, in that case, I was not wrong. But certainly Isaiah was not, and that is what we’re interested in, in what Isaiah did. And so I want to look at the chapter simply from this viewpoint. Not thinking of the prophecy of the virgin birth, but getting the understanding of the chapter from the viewpoint of the immediate message in relation to a historical situation. We’ve already noticed the character of King Ahaz. Ahaz, though descended from David, the king who was a man after God’s own heart, the man who wrote so many of the Psalms, the one to whom God gave the promise that he would always have a descendent to sit on his throne, this descendent of David was this wicked man Ahaz. Now Ahaz’s father, Jotham, seems from the record to have been a fairly good man. Ahaz’s son, Hezekiah, was perhaps the best of all the kings of Judah.

But in between the two is this wicked king. Why do you have this change, why do you have a fairly good king and then a wicked king and then, perhaps, a best king? I think there is a warning here for all of us. It is my observation that the

character of the child is more determined by the mother than by the father in this case. The Scripture hasn't told us much about the mothers but my guess is that it was to quite an extent due to the woman whom Jotham married and to the woman who was the mother of Hezekiah that they were men of such different character. Now of course that does not always determine character but it is a most important factor. It amuses me how we figure our genealogy and we trace back our names. If we meet somebody of the same name we have, we think it's so interesting that he may be related, when as a matter of fact we probably were much more affected in our character and attitudes by our mothers than by our fathers. So if you want to trace back your genealogy to see the influences that have been most important on you, you've got to give your mother's name and her mother's name and so on, though I'm afraid most of us couldn't go more than 4 or 5 generations, if that far.

But at any rate, Ahaz was a very wicked man and he was the descendent of David. He was the one who was sitting on the throne. Isaiah did not go into the royal palace and say, "I want to speak to you," as he would in the reign of Ahaz's son, Hezekiah. In fact, he wouldn't have had to because Hezekiah, we find, would have gone right to the prophet Isaiah and asked him what the Lord's will was in each difficult situation. But Ahaz didn't want to be bothered, and so we read in verse 3, "the Lord said to Isaiah, 'Go out, you and your son, Shear-Jashub,'" a name which means 'a remnant shall return.' It is an unusual name, certainly. It is a name which had a meaning that would carry much more meaning to them than. Most of our names today merely are what our fathers or grandfathers had, or are something we thought of that sounded clever, but in those days most of the names had meaning and this one would mean 'a remnant shall return.' In other words, there was misery ahead but God's mercy would still be with them to save a remnant. There will be a remnant, a small group of survivors. Well now, why would there be a remnant unless there are some pretty bad things ahead? Anybody who knew Ahaz's character and the character of his principle leaders would know that there must be difficult days ahead.

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But the Lord said, “Go out to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the upper pool, on the road to the Washerman’s field.” Why does it so explicitly tell us where it is? It was where he used to meet him. Perhaps we’ll come across something later in our study that will give some hint of why this should be so specifically named, but at this point we merely notice that he is going out of the city; he’s not going to the royal palace. He’s going outside to where the outer limit of the defense is, where Ahaz is on a defense inspection and is trying to encourage the people to build up strong defenses and to prepare to fight valiantly against the expected attack from Israel and Aram. Of course, Ahaz knows that if the people will fight strongly enough to resist the attack that he expects from these two, then they won’t have to keep on fighting a long time because the Assyrian army is going to come. He sent all this money to the Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser and Tiglath-pileser would be glad for an excuse to attack anyway, without the money. So Ahaz is quite sure Tiglath-pileser will come and deliver him from them. He’s going to give up his freedom and surrender to him in order to stay alive. After all, it’s better to be red than dead, isn’t it? It is better to be a slave to Tiglath-pileser than to be defeated and killed. So Ahaz is figuring that the immediate danger is not tremendous; he wants the people to fight and to work to protect him from the immediate danger, and if only they’ll do that, it won’t be long before the king of Assyria will be there with his forces.

So Isaiah cannot get his attention by going into the palace and saying, “I’d like to see the King.” Well, if Hezekiah was king they’d say, “Come right in,” and if Hezekiah was terribly busy, he would tell other people to wait a few minutes and see Isaiah right away. But Ahaz would undoubtedly say, “It would be nice to talk with you. Come back in three months and we’ll see if we can find some time for this visit.” So Isaiah goes out there where Ahaz cannot simply avoid him. Ahaz is anxious that the people shall fight valiantly, that they should work hard on building the fortifications, and he knows that most of the people think that this

man is a prophet of God. He knows that this old superstition is still held by a great number of people and if he mistreats Isaiah or is blatantly scornful to him, the people will perhaps not work as hard in establishing the preparations to protect them. So Ahaz is in a rather difficult situation.

So the Lord says, “Say to him, ‘Be careful. Keep calm. Don’t be afraid. Don’t lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood, because of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram and of the son of Remaliah. Aram, Ephraim, and Remaliah’s son have plotted your ruin, saying, ‘Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves and make the son of Tabeel king over it.’ Yet this is what the sovereign Lord says, ‘It will not take place; it will not happen; for the head of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is only Rezin. Within 65 years, Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people. The head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is only Remaliah’s son. If you do not stand firm in your faith you will not stand at all.’”

Then Ahaz says, “Isaiah’s delayed all the people; they’ve quit their work; they’re looking at him and listening to what he has to say. I wish he’d move on and let us get on with what’s important. He can give his line of talk and the people are apt to get lazy and disregard the things that really matter like building up our defenses. What we need is to protect ourselves from the immediate danger, and as far as ultimate danger is concerned, Isaiah said, ‘Within 65 years Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people.’ Well, if Tiglath-pileser comes we won’t have to wait 65 years for them to be shattered. Tiglath-pileser, with his tremendous force, will free us from them. Then we’ll have safety. If we have to keep paying tribute to Assyria, we can do that. We won’t worry about it. I just want to get rid of Isaiah!” And so Ahaz hopes that Isaiah is going to leave.

But then we read in verse 10, “Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz.” So here Isaiah had gone and given a message. Now, how did Isaiah know what message to give? Did God speak to Isaiah in an audible voice that people could have heard if they were there? Did he speak in an internal voice so that Isaiah heard and knew

what God said, so that someone else that would not have heard it? We don't know. Isaiah was probably alone when he got the original message and we don't know how God gave it to him. In those days there were cases when God spoke like this directly to His prophets. Now that we have the entire Word of God in the Bible, we get our guidance from the principles we find in the Scripture. So it is rare, if ever, that God speaks directly in these days to human beings. But in giving us the Bible, he spoke on important occasions as he did to Isaiah.

But however the Lord spoke to Isaiah there in verse 3, we are now in a different situation. Verse 10 says, "Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz," and here Isaiah is right there in front of Ahaz. We can understand that when it says, "Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz," that it means that the Lord gave Isaiah a message right on the spot to give to Ahaz. Did God simply speak through Isaiah? Did God put the words, the ideas, into Isaiah's mind and Isaiah spoke it as what the Lord has given us, as his message?

We don't know the precise method the Lord used, but we know that God spoke to Isaiah giving him a further message to Ahaz. The message that he gives him is, "Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."

Ahaz responds, "What foolishness are we getting now?" He says, "He's coming! He's given his drivel and the people have quit their work to listen to him! They think, 'Now trust the Lord and we'll be safe!'"

"Well," Ahaz says, "I'd rather trust this King of Assyria, and I know we'll be safe from Israel. I'd rather trust human things I can see. I want to have these people keep on with the work, and he's disturbing them from it; I'd wish he'd just go away! But instead of that Isaiah says, 'Ask for a sign! Ask for the sign whether in the deepest depths or the highest heights.' How can I get rid of the fellow quickly and get the people, who believe he's a prophet of God, back to work?"

So Ahaz says, "I will not ask. I will not put the Lord to the test." What a beautiful statement. Isn't that a lovely attitude? Remember when Thomas said, "I

will not believe in Christ except I put my fingers into the holes in his hands and his feet, and feel the hole in his side. I will not believe that He is really raised from the dead.” It was such a tremendous thing, that Jesus was raised from the dead. Such a tremendous miracle, the greatest miracle of all history, that we cannot blame Thomas for demanding evidence. We should insist upon evidence for things with which we are not familiar. But to those who *know* God, to those who *know* the Lord Jesus Christ, what we find in His word we can trust. We can depend upon it, we don’t need to look for further evidence, because we already *have* the many evidences of the truth of the Scripture, and we already have the evidence of our own hearts--if we have believed in Christ and have been saved by His blood.

In this case and in many cases, it would sound like a beautiful, pious, statement: “I will not ask. I will not ask to put the Lord to the test. We’ll just trust the Lord; we’ll go ahead. Don’t you worry Isaiah; we know it’s right. But in this case it’s the King of Assyria we’re trusting, not your God that you talk about, but don’t you worry.” Well, it sounds like a beautiful statement, but I think we must assume that there was something that Ahaz could not help letting creep into his voice, or his manner, or his facial expression, that made it rather obvious that he was just trying to get rid of Isaiah, and that he did not mean it in a serious way at all. Because we don’t find Isaiah saying, “Oh! I’m so glad, Ahaz, you’re trusting in the Lord! You’re believing God’s wonderful promise that within sixty-five years Israel will no longer be a menace to you.” Because Isaiah *doesn’t* say “That’s fine Ahaz!”

We read in verse 13, “Then Isaiah said, ‘Hear now you house of David, is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also?’” That would be a very strange answer to Ahaz’s pious sounding words, if it were not for the fact that it was perfectly obvious that his words were hypocritical. So Isaiah gives this rebuke to Ahaz, and we’re going to skip over for the moment what he says about the sign that the Lord is going to give. We’re going to skip to verse sixteen. There we read: “But before the boy” -- we don’t question now who

or what boy he's talking about-- "before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste."

Well, that's a better promise, isn't it? The promise before was that within sixty-five years Israel would be gone. Well, who worries what happens in sixty-five years? Long before that Israel and Aram would destroy us. But now, Isaiah says, "Before a little boy, not even yet born, will reach the age where he can make simple choices, and reach for the cup of milk instead of for the hot stove, before he's able to make simple choices," he says, "the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste." Then he goes on: "The Lord is going to bring on you and your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah. He will bring the king of Assyria."

When Isaiah says that, you can just see Ahaz start, "What does *he* know about the king of Assyria? The king of Assyria is *way* over there across the desert; what is he talking about the king of Assyria for? I've secretly sent this message to the king of Assyria. I've sent him all this pay for him to come and deliver me! Has somebody told Isaiah what I'm planning? Isn't this terrible that he knows it? Well at least the rest of the people don't know it, and let's hope they didn't catch what Isaiah said here."

But Isaiah goes on: "In that day the Lord will whistle for flies from the distant stream of Egypt and for bees from the land of Assyria. We're not worried," Isaiah says, "about these people of Israel and Aram that you're so worried about. We're thinking of the people way beyond them! We're thinking of what's going to happen, that they're going to come into your land." He says, "They will all come and settle in the steep ravines and in the crevices in the rocks, on all the thorn bushes, and at all the water holes. In that day, the Lord will use a razor hired from beyond the river, the king of Assyria." A razor hired from beyond the Euphrates River. Isaiah is here revealing the divine knowledge of the fact that Ahaz is hiring the king of Assyria to come to deliver him from Aram and Israel.

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But Isaiah says, “He is going to do this to shave your head and the hair of your legs and to take off your beards also. You’re going to be in trouble for looking to this wicked realm of Assyria for your protection. In that day a man will keep alive a young bull and two goats and because of the abundance of the milk they give he will have curds to eat. All who remain in the land will eat curds and honey.” What does that mean? It means that there is going to be a great depopulation. In your land, Ahaz, many people are going to be killed. Some will be carried off into captivity. There will be so much land that there will not be enough people to cultivate it and to grow crops but there will be plenty of land for pasturage. So you can get plenty of what you get from the animals that pasture. There will be curds and there will be honey for everybody. In that day and every place where there were farms worth a thousand silver shekels, there will be only briars and thorns. Men will go there with bow and arrow, for the land will be covered with briars and thorns so you can hardly get through it. Such a great depopulation will be the result of Ahaz’s clever scheme of inviting the Assyrians to help them. As for the hills once cultivated, you will no longer go there for fear of the briars and thorns. They will become places where cattle are turned loose and where sheep run.

So the historical situation is that Isaiah goes to rebuke King Ahaz for his clever human scheme of making alliance with ungodliness in order to save his life. Isaiah says, “God can protect and he will protect your land, but there’s misery ahead first; misery, which has been caused by your act in bringing in the King of Assyria.” So much then for our present look at the historical situation.

Right at this moment I think it would be good for me to pause for a moment to mention the assignment for next week. It will deal with Isaiah 36 and 37, which show the ultimate result of what Ahaz did. Thirty years later in the reign of his son, Hezekiah, another king of Assyria will come and will overrun all the land of Judah. He will even threaten to conquer Jerusalem. This king, King Sennacherib -- you will find named in chapters 36 to 37-- he will come and do that, but God will

deliver because God has promised to deliver them, though they will have miserable times as a result of Ahaz's scheme which does away with the border states and brings Assyria right to their doorstep. Now this assignment is going to have three parts and the second and third parts of it will be rather brief. I don't want you to get them from any book or commentary. I want to see if you notice them in chapters 36 and 37. If you don't notice them, don't worry about it; but I will be interested to see who does notice it. But I'd like you to do the paper simply by what you get from the text. Use any English version you want, preferably two of them, so at any point of uncertainty you can compare them. Of course, if anyone wants to do it all direct from the Hebrew, I will have no objection to that, but that is not the assignment.

But the first part of the assignment is a long part. It is to list all proper names contained in these two chapters, and briefly state what you know about each. Thus if you read, 'Shebna the scribe,' you can just put down his name, and say, 'an official of the king of Assyria or the king of Aram,' or whatever it is if it is obvious from the chapter. I'm not asking you to look up anything other than you can gather from the chapter. If you find a name of a place or a person that's unfamiliar to you, and not identified in the context, you might look it up in a good Bible dictionary and then just mention your source. But in most cases that won't be necessary.

But now we wish to go on to the second part, then, to our present discussion, and that is suggested by the fact that in chapter 7, verse 2, we read, "Now the house of David was told, 'Aram had allied itself with Ephraim.'" Why does he say the house of David? Then when you get down to verse 10 Isaiah says, "Hear now you house of David!" Why should he say that? David's throne is extremely important for the understanding of the first section of Isaiah that we are discussing today, the section that runs from Isaiah 7 to 12.

Back in 2 Samuel 7, we find the account of how David was going to build a great temple, and God said, "I don't want you to build this great temple; you have

been a man of war; you have greatly enlarged the borders of Israel; I don't want you to build the temple, I want your son to build it, but I am greatly pleased at your interest in building a house for me. I am going to build a house for you." And in verses 11-16 we have the promise that the prophet Nathan gave to David: "The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you. When your days are over, and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong I will punish him with the rod of man, with floggings inflicted by men, but my love will never be taken away from him as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.

You remember that when Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, that they rejoiced that the promised king was come, the descendant of David, the leader of the house of David. Now this promise was given to David in 2 Samuel 7; in 2 Chronicles 17:10b-14 we have a repetition of it, the same incident told again. In Psalm 89, which was written after Judah had come into very difficult times, we find there a mention again of the wonderful promises given to David; in verses 3-4 we read as the psalmist addresses God, "You said I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations" and then in verse 20 of that same chapter we read, "I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him," and in verses 28-37 we read, "I will maintain my love to him forever and my covenant with him will never fail; I will establish his line forever; his throne as long as the heavens endure. If his sons forsake my law and do not follow my statutes, if they violate my decrees and fail to keep my commands, I will punish their sin with the rod, their iniquities with flogging; but I will not take my love from him nor will I ever betray my faithfulness. I will not

violate my covenant or alter what my lips have uttered. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness and I will not lie to David that his line will continue forever and his throne endure before me like the sun. It will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky.”

So there's this wonderful promise that was made to David. Now regarding Isaiah 40-56, I have written a book which I have called the Gospel of Isaiah because that is the section that tells about the wonderful savior that God has promised. The section we're looking at this semester, section 7-12, is about the king God has coming. It is the coming king, the coming head of the house of David. So we find in chapter 7 the references to the house of David, and we find in verse 11 that Isaiah said, "Hear now you house of David, is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? God is not going to be content with having the house of David represented long by such an unworthy leader as Ahaz. God is going to provide a leader for the house of David who will be what God wants him to be. It will be the Lord Jesus Christ. So in this section he is looking forward to the coming of Emmanuel, the coming of the great king. Now it is interesting as you look at the history of Israel and Judah how, in the Northern Kingdom, the king of Israel Jeroboam reigned, and then his son reigned for a short time, and then he was assassinated and Baasha, a new family line took over; Baasha reigned and was succeeded by his son Elah who was soon assassinated, then a new family line from Omri took over and there were four kings of his line, and then the last of them was killed; and then a new dynasty took over, the dynasty of Jehu, which had five kings, and then there were three or four more different kings during the years up to when the Northern Kingdom was deported by Assyria in 722 B.C. All this variety in the northern kingdom.

But in the Southern Kingdom all this period, the house of David continued from the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C. up to 722 when the Northern Kingdom went into captivity, and then continued on for nearly a hundred and fifty years up until 587 B.C. when Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by the Babylonians. It looked as if

the house of David had come to an end, but it had not. The people looked for the fulfillment of God's promise, the continuance of the house of David. Micah in Micah 5:2 promised that "out of Bethlehem would come the one who is to be a ruler over my people Israel," and when Jesus was born the wise men came and brought him gifts fitting for a coming king recorded in Matthew 2.

Now in this section we find the promise of Jesus' birth in verse 14: "The Lord himself will give you a son; the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call his name Emmanuel." In chapter 8 we have again two references to Emmanuel, and then in chapter 9 we find those wonderful statements in verse 6: "For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be on his shoulder and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." The house of David looks forward to a continuing line, but more than that it continues to the one descendent of David, the one who is to be the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace. When you get to chapter 11 you find that it begins with the words "a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse." --Jesse was David's father. "From his roots a branch will bear fruit. The spirit of the Lord will rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding." The next verse says, "He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he hears with his ears," and the last part of verse 4 says, "He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked." The wonderful promises of the coming of Emmanuel, yet here in chapter 7 we had a threat that the line of David would be misplaced, would be displaced and would be destroyed. Israel and Aram were going to put in the son of Tabeel to be king. They were going to do away with the house of David. God would not permit that to happen. God promises he's going to bring his own Emmanuel. This is Emmanuel's land and so that is the great theme here of the book of Isaiah -- Emmanuel is the coming of the son of David.

They were going to do away with the kings of the descendants of David and put in someone else; and it doesn't really matter who he is to us. The important

thing is that they were going to bring an end to the house of David. God says that cannot happen. The house of David is leading up to the coming of the great Savior of all who put their trust in him. It is leading up to the coming of Emmanuel. These kings are not merely trying to overthrow the land; they are trying to change the leadership of it and to put in the son of Tabeel. He says that won't succeed. God is going to put in his own king. God is going to bring one, and this is the way you'll know who he is, he will be virgin born.

Isaiah says within 65 years, though actually it happened about 12 years later. See, within about 2 or 3 years after this the Assyrian army overran Aram, made Aram part of Assyria, and took the people of Aram captive, because the Assyrians had a very clever system. They would conquer a land and they would deport its leading people, its educated people, and move them to another part of Assyria. They'd take the people from that area and take them to another part and the result would be that the people who were taken into an area would be looked on as outsiders by the people already there. So they wouldn't be ready to join with them in revolting against Assyria.

The Assyrians took all the leading people off into captivity and they brought people from other countries in, and that was the Assyrian method all over in order to establish the strength of their empire. The result of that was that within 65 years Ephraim was so scattered it wasn't a people anymore. There are those who talk about the 10 lost tribes. Actually, there's no 10 lost tribes, but there were many individuals who just disappeared into the various peoples among whom they went. The people who came back after the later Babylonian exile included people from all 12 tribes; there were no lost 10 tribes.

There used to be a big British Israel movement but I haven't heard much of it lately – but the idea of it was that England is the true Israel and that they are the 10 lost tribes. Well Britain was the greatest land in the world 50 years ago, and they used to boast that the sun never set on the British empire. Today it is a comparatively inferior country and so I would think British Israelism would

disappear with it, but I have heard of people in recent years who were very strong British Israelites. There's no basis in the Scripture for it; the people who came back were from all the tribes, and the son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the one who should be the head over all who believe in God and who trust him.

So we have this great theme of the continuance of the house of David. Now people will say – there are modernists who write commentaries on Isaiah who say – what comfort would it be to Ahaz to tell him that Jesus Christ would come 700 years later? How would that comfort Ahaz? Well, who wants to comfort Ahaz? There's no thought of comforting Ahaz. He's rebuking Ahaz. He says, "is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also?" There's no comfort to Ahaz in this but there is comfort to the true people of God. The house of David will not come to an end but the one who is the climax of it, the one to whom it looks for, will come; the one through whom we can receive salvation, through the Lord Jesus Christ who is the true son of David. So here's your sign. God is not going to put up with such a head of the house of David as this man, Ahaz, forever. He is going to provide his virgin born son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and I believe that's what the angel told to Joseph. I don't believe that's simply Matthew's words. I believe that Irenaeus was right when he said this. I believe that the English Revised Version of 1881 and the American Standard Version of 1901 were right when they translated that way. I believe that the great German scholar Zahn and the great British scholar Plummer were correct when they interpreted it that way so I must confess I reached that conclusion before I was aware that any of these others held that conclusion. They may be wrong and I may be wrong; it may be that it is Matthew's words. But if it is, it's still the Word of God. The Word of God is true and dependable in every bit of it and the Word of God says that, here, the virgin birth of Jesus was predicted.

Transcribed by: Katharine Ryan (editor); Kelsey Langness, Molly Porizio, Hannah Oresten, Faith Clasby, Sarah Pitts, Maddie Harkins  
Edited by Becky Brinton and Ted Hildebrandt  
Re-narrated by Bill Gates

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