

Isaiah 7:10-25

¹⁰ Moreover the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above." ¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" 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? 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. ¹⁵ Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings. ¹⁷ The LORD will bring the king of Assyria upon you and your people and your father's house--days that have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah." ¹⁸ And it shall come to pass in that day *That* the LORD will whistle for the fly *That is* in the farthest part of the rivers of Egypt, And for the bee that *is* in the land of Assyria. ¹⁹ They will come, and all of them will rest In the desolate valleys and in the clefts of the rocks, And on all thorns and in all pastures. ²⁰ In the same day the Lord will shave with a hired razor, With those from beyond the River, with the king of Assyria, The head and the hair of the legs, And will also remove the beard. ²¹ It shall be in that day *That* a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep; ²² So it shall be, from the abundance of milk they give, That he will eat curds; For curds and honey everyone will eat who is left in the land. ²³ It shall happen in that day, *That* wherever there could be a thousand vines *Worth* a thousand *shekels* of silver, It will be for briers and thorns. ²⁴ With arrows and bows men will come there, Because all the land will become briers and thorns. ²⁵ And to any hill which could be dug with the hoe, You will not go there for fear of briers and thorns; But it will become a range for oxen And a place for sheep to roam.

Isaiah 8:1-4

¹ Moreover the LORD said to me, "Take a large scroll, and write on it with a man's pen concerning Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. ² And I will take for Myself faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah." ³ Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Call his name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz; ⁴ for before the child shall have knowledge to cry 'My father' and 'My mother,' the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria."

Have you ever been presented with two paths where one was clearly the right path and one was clearly the wrong one? Maybe it had to do with a relationship that you knew to be wrong, a relationship you knew you shouldn't pursue but you very much wanted to? Maybe a commitment to job or a hobby? Maybe it was an addiction of some sort. Maybe it was beginning something that you knew was sinful but wanted to continue down that path? Maybe it was a path of thinking wrongly.

I think we have all had this kind of test. And it is likely that we have all failed this kind of test. Do you remember how strongly you wanted that wrong thing? And if anyone addressed you at that point, you would have been hard pressed to be civil or reasonable. You would just want **to silence** the dissenting voice so you could get about following your heart and pursuing that wrong path.

Or maybe you have watched as someone you loved did this same thing. You could see them making their destructive choice and nothing you could do could stop them?

What we are looking at this morning is a person who is doing this very thing. Ahaz is faced with a decision. He can follow God and submit to God and trust God. Or he can do the thing he thinks will have a better outcome. He will follow **his own path** to happiness. He can follow his heart.

We are going to see just how resistant the human heart can be to every reasoned appeal. At the end of the day, reason doesn't explain what we do. Living in a fallen sinful world is a better explanation. We will see that fact illustrated clearly in just a few verses.

Are you facing a tempting sinful path this morning? Are you playing with poison in your mind? Are you examining a pathway that you greatly desire but know is sinful for you? Then Ahaz is the example you need to see. Watch carefully what the end of this path is for you.

Look at verse 10.

¹⁰ Moreover the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above."

This is a very unusual request by God. God is saying to Ahaz, pick a test to prove that I am able to do what I say. Go ahead. Pick any test you want.

Do you see what is happening here? God is graciously offering to Ahaz any evidence that Ahaz needs to believe. He is offering to be tested in any way Ahaz would see fit. He was offering to overcome any obstacle of unbelief that Ahaz might have. God does not offer such a thing very often. Essentially God is **tempting Ahaz** to disprove Ahaz's own disbelief. God knows that Ahaz has no intention of trusting and obeying God. And Ahaz is probably justifying his faithless response in his own head. He is probably telling Himself that he has a

good reason for taking this path. And Ahaz's reasons probably include the idea that God is not capable of delivering **him and the Judean people** against the threat that is up against them.

So God says, try me. Let me show you I can meet any test you come up with. Let me show you that **your reasoning is flawed**. Let me re-educate your decision process. Let me make **being smart** be easy for you. You can try me out before you trust me for the really important thing in your life. Watch how I perform in a test before you really risk anything of value to you.

Some people say that following God is the process of blind faith. What God offers Ahaz is as far from blind faith as is possible. God is allowing Ahaz to test drive his faith. He is offered Ahaz to see if trusting God works in a test. God is offering to remove any obstacle to reason that Ahaz has.

So what do we see? Does Ahaz say, OK God. I want you to do this thing I have thought of so I can see with my own eyes that you can actually perform this miracle that we need? No that is not what we see.

¹² **But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!"**

Why does Ahaz respond that way? At first glance we might think that Ahaz is respecting God and will not put God to a test. But as we read more we find that is not the case at all. What we see in Ahaz is what we see in anyone who is already committed to a course of action. Ahaz doesn't want conflicting truth to what he already believes. Ahaz says with his actions, I really don't care **what the truth is**. I don't care what **will work best**. I don't care **what God wants** for me. I don't care what **God will do for me**. I don't care about what **God wants me to do**. I have plans of my own and I am committed to them. I have no intentions of giving them up, no matter how stupid or ineffective or wicked they prove to be.

Now when we see **Ahaz** do this, we can see easily just how evil this is. We can see how awful he is acting. We can see the utter foolishness of making a stand like this.

The big problem here is that we don't see it the same way when **we** put ourselves in that very same place. We don't see that we are being a little Ahaz when our favorite sin looms in front of us, testing and tempting us. And at some point we say, I am going to do this. It is the same attitude as Ahaz. And we rationalize and we make excuses and we lie to ourselves about what we are doing. But God isn't fooled. We are just playing Ahaz. We even know plenty of truths that would keep us from pursuing that evil, but, by golly, we are going to do it anyway.

We all know from experience what **the Ahaz reaction is**. We have all been there. It is the peak of folly and arrogance and ignorance and wickedness. It is all the things that we know better than to do. But we reject all the truth that would keep us from this path we want, we ignore the dissenting voices and the proofs of our foolishness, and we plunge ahead with our plans.

Maybe it is a path of self satisfaction, or pride, or lust, or pleasure, or self pity, or revenge, or bitterness, or laziness, or hatefulness, or jealousy, or rage, or fear. We can go on and on. Our paths of sin can be very varied. But the attitude when we **commit to them** is the same. We want what we want and we don't want to be distracted by the truth. We don't want the truth to change our plans.

Sometimes we think that if we only had someone telling us the truth we would have chosen differently. But often that is just self deception. Often the truth would have just been a nuisance if it had gotten in our way. We often would have had a way of getting around it. Most of the sin we choose, we choose because we think it will make us happy or give us something we really want. Most of the time, we knew enough truth to keep us from our wrong paths. The problem is that truth won't change our **commitment to that path** until we choose **to believe the truth** at the expense of our temporary pleasure. A person telling us the truth won't change our hearts when they want to sin. Only us wanting the truth more than we want something else will change us. Only love for Jesus will make us want to change our paths. When we love Christ we will love the truth. And when we love the truth, the truth will change us.

Ahaz was offered proof that could have guided him in the right direction. It would have been rock solid proof that he could have been completely confident in. It would have won every reasoned argument regarding what he should do next. But that is not what Ahaz wanted. So he rejected it.

Now, what did God think of it when Ahaz stuck to his path even though God had offered him everything to change his mind?

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?"** ¹⁴ **Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign**

Ahaz was the personification of the house of David. He was David's legitimate heir. So this was addressed to him.

Isaiah here lies out the seriousness of the crime. Had Ahaz been just responding to Isaiah, that would be one thing. And it would have been bad enough if he had been resisting a prophet of God like that. But that is not what Ahaz was doing. Ahaz evidently believed that what he was being offered by the prophet was really from God. He must have believed that God was offering through Isaiah a chance to test God. So, because he believed that, his response was really addressed to God, not Isaiah. Ahaz was wearying God.

This wearying means to wear one's self out. To get weary from trying. Have you ever had someone that, no matter how hard you tried to minister to them, they were going to stay on the path they were on?

We have some people at work who are convinced that people are out to get them. It doesn't matter how many times you talk to them and show them the truth, they

revert back to their default position. You can wear yourself out on them because it will never have any effect.

I have been told that when I was very young my dad would take me out of almost every church service to spank me. I would imagine I was very much wearying him.

How do we weary the people who try to minister to us? How do we choose not to believe what they are telling us? How do we resist responding to their ministry? Well if they are representatives of Christ, what we are doing **to them** is what we are **doing to God**. If we are wearing out those who are ministering to us, we are probably also wearying God as well. Who are we **tiring out** in their efforts to make a point in our lives?

So, in Ahaz's case, even though he would not ask for a sign, God was going to give him one.

Now what is the sign?

: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. ¹⁵ **Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.** ¹⁶ **For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings.**

Now, does this sound familiar to you? It should. It is a prophecy of Christ. How can we be sure? Matthew said so. He told us that Christ was the direct fulfillment of this scripture.

Matthew 1:20-23

²⁰ **But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.** ²¹ **And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."** ²² **So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:** ²³ ***"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,"* which is translated, "God with us."**

Now, how can this be? Doesn't the sign that **Isaiah spoke to Ahaz** mean anything to Ahaz? Wasn't it addressed to him? Wasn't it supposed to affect Ahaz? Isn't that the point?

Yes. That is the point. This prophecy, like many others like it, has a dual purpose. It was a sign **to Ahaz** and it was a sign to **the nation of Israel** much later on. Some have used this prophesy to try to prove that Christ was not born of a virgin. The word in Hebrew for virgin also means young woman. So it could be interpreted either way. They would say that since this prophecy was fulfilled the first time by Isaiah having a son with his wife in the normal sort of way, that

means that the same thing could happen with Christ's birth. And if this were the only verse addressing the virgin birth we would be hard pressed to put up an argument. But the New Testament tells us that Mary conceived without having been with a man. So we can take this word "virgin" with its alternate meaning. What a wonderful prophecy this was for us. It promised Christ to us. A child would be born in order for us to have God with us. Sometimes it seems too good to be true. It seems like a science fiction story. God came and dwelt among us. And no one would have known from a distance that He was any different than any of us. No glow. No halo. Just God with us.

According to scripture, we as humans were in the same shape as Ahaz. We didn't want God. We weren't pursuing God. We weren't pleasing to God. We only wanted to live our own lives our own ways. But God intruded into our lives. He gave us a sign, even though we did not have the good sense or inclination to ask for one.

We also had brutal enemies threatening us like Ahaz did. We had something more dangerous than armies. We had our sin nature looming large. Its doom was **inescapable**. There was no place to hide from God when He served justice on us for what we had been and done. But unlike removing a threat **temporarily** like God did for Judea, God sent **His Son** to save His people from their sin **for all time**. He provided a permanent rescue from the most dangerous enemy. And He graciously took hold of our souls and called us to Himself. He changed our hearts until we desired what He had to offer us. By and large, we are Ahaz in this story, **receiving a precious sign** before ever having the sense **to want one**, and receiving a rescue that we could never deserve. And now we have Jesus. And God is with us.

As for Ahaz, the sign was completed for him when Isaiah's son was born in Isaiah 8 right after the end of the Chapter we are in.

¹ Moreover the LORD said to me, "Take a large scroll, and write on it with a man's pen concerning Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. ² And I will take for Myself faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah." ³ Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Call his name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz; ⁴ for before the child shall have knowledge to cry 'My father' and 'My mother,' the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria."

Now **Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz** means "The spoil speeds, the prey hastens,". How does that have anything to do with Immanuel, God with us? Well, look at what is happening here. Remember the threat that Ahaz is trying to protect himself from. He is responding to Ephraim and Syria getting ready to attack him.

Well Isaiah's son is going to be a testament to the fact that God was with Judea. Before the child reaches the age of speaking, the two enemies will be conquered and looted by Assyria. So God will carry out all of His promises regarding this specific threat. Isaiah's son will display that God truly was "with them." But Ahaz will already have had made a huge mistake by then. He was going to appeal to Assyria to protect Judea from Syria and Israel. I liked how one of the commentaries described it. He said it was like two mice fighting and one of the mice calls the cat to help break up the fight. That is what Ahaz did. He called the cat. He was not careful to **do nothing** like he was told. And the cat is going to make the mice pay.

But back to the sign of a son being born. This was also promised in verse 15.

¹⁵ **Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.** ¹⁶ **For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings.** Curds and honey, while they might sound pretty good to us, were really food that the poor ate. So this could mean that Judea will not be in its heyday while this was happening. But the timing is clear. There will be 9 months of pregnancy and then less than 2 years later this deliverance will take place. It will be before the child has knowledge to determine right and wrong and is able to speak. It is obviously a very young child.

So, God is giving Ahaz this sign. Ahaz wouldn't ask for it. Ahaz would not trust God. He blatantly and stubbornly refused. But God would satisfy Himself and give a sign anyway. It isn't like Ahaz's refusal could stop God from doing what He wanted to do.

And look at what God promises Ahaz. God is going to deliver Judea from the current threat and He is going to give a sign to show that **it was Him** who did it. But look what Isaiah says in verse 16. The land that **you dread** will be forsaken. Here is another example to avoid. Here is Ahaz worried about a credible threat. He is dreading what the approaching armies would do to Judea. He would have been able to give all kinds of good reasons for being worried about this enemy at his gates. He would have probably made anyone who tried to correct him look stupid by pointing to the reality and seriousness of the threat. But no matter how smart it may have looked, **worry is always stupid for a Christian**. First, because God forbids it. Second because it misses an opportunity to exercise our faith in God's promises. Third, because worry can't accomplish anything. Fourth, worry always has a destructive effect on us. And fifth, worry wastes the time that we could be using for some positive purpose.

Matthew 6:25-33

²⁵ **"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life**

more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? ²⁸ So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; ²⁹ and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, *will He* not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

What potential threat are we dreading? We need to get this in our heads. God does not **sympathize** with worry. His ministry to us is not empathetic. Worry is sin. Worry calls God a liar. It is blatant disregard of his character. And it should have no place in our thinking. It isn't smart. It isn't defensible. It is sin. We do well to catch it early on before it has a chance to gain a foothold in our imagination.

I like what Mark Twain had to say about worry.

He said **"I've had a lot of worries in my life, most of which never happened."** And **"Worrying is like paying a debt you don't owe."**

There is a lot of wisdom there. But even more in what David said in Psalms **27:1** **The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?**

Now let's finish with the rest of the text.

Isaiah 7:10-25

¹⁷ The LORD will bring the king of Assyria upon you and your people and your father's house--days that have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah. ¹⁸ And it shall come to pass in that day *That* the LORD will whistle for the fly *That is* in the farthest part of the rivers of Egypt, And for the bee that *is* in the land of Assyria. ¹⁹ They will come, and all of them will rest In the desolate valleys and in the clefts of the rocks, And on all thorns and in all pastures. ²⁰ In the same day the Lord will shave with a hired razor, With those from beyond the River, with the king of Assyria, The head and the hair of the legs, And will also remove the beard. ²¹ It shall be in that day *That* a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep; ²² So it shall be, from the abundance of milk they give, That he will eat curds; For curds and honey everyone will eat who is left in the land. ²³ It shall happen in that day, *That* wherever there could be a thousand vines *Worth* a thousand *shekels*

of silver, It will be for briers and thorns. ²⁴ With arrows and bows men will come there, Because all the land will become briers and thorns. ²⁵ And to any hill which could be dug with the hoe, You will not go there for fear of briers and thorns; But it will become a range for oxen And a place for sheep to roam.

We need to consider this. God provided a rescue from Judea's present danger. But he did not rescue Judea from the consequences of Ahaz's faithless appeal to Assyria for help, for an alliance. When Ahaz crossed that line, there was no going back.

Look at the imagery here. God whistles and Judea's enemies come hustling in. Isn't it ironic? People in power think they are in control. But they have no idea what is going on in the spiritual realities. They are serving God's will as much as we are when God **requires their services**. They are just doing it unwillingly and unwittingly. They receive no reward for doing it. Their motive is not love for God. Often it is actually hatred for God.

We should never get the idea that things are out of control. They never are.

The picture that Isaiah paints is of a land that once was wonderful and beautiful and productive but now is desolate and worthless. The vineyards are gone and the work to rebuild them would be considerable. Now the person with a cow and a couple of sheep are at the top of the food chain. In the past this would barely have been enough to feed the servants. Now it feeds the whole family. There is lots of land for the animals to graze on. So they do pretty well. And due to all the briers, thorns and brush, there are a lot of places for bees to make their hives. So there is lots of honey. But this land is only a shadow of what it was in the past.

You almost get the idea that now the land is not a blessing to the throngs of Judeans. It is now only a blessing to the outcasts and the rejects, the vagabonds.

The Judeans, as a whole, abandoned living for their God. Then the leaders abandoned justice and took up with idols. The mindset of the people became more and more godless. Until now Ahaz culminates this rebellion by rejecting God's offer to change his mind and his heart. Ahaz refuses to even allow God to have a test in his life. He refuses to allow God to show what He could do for Ahaz. Ahaz follows the path of his own choosing. He follows his heart instead of his God.

And God starts to whistle for the things that would show Ahaz what a foolish thing it is to reject the provision of God.

I would like to close with a quote from one of the commentaries.

The author said:

we should be asking ourselves, Am I trusting God right now, where it counts for me? If we welcome God as our ally and yield to His way, His timing, His control, His glory, HE will fight for us. And we will have no regrets. He never

lets faith go unmet. But if we set our own terms, we will fight alone. Jesus said, "According to your faith be it unto you" ([Matthew 9:29](#), kjv). Moment by moment, that is the key to life.

Preaching the Word - Preaching the Word – Isaiah: God Saves Sinners.

Sing Be still my soul