

The Prophecies of Isaiah ¹⁷

Lesson 6

The fourth vision of Isaiah is given for Ahaz, the Southern King who has failed to lead and protect his people, allowing the Northern Kingdom and Aram to kill or take into captivity more than 350,000 people. Ahaz is worried. The Lord now has Ahaz where He wants him and He sends Isaiah with a message.

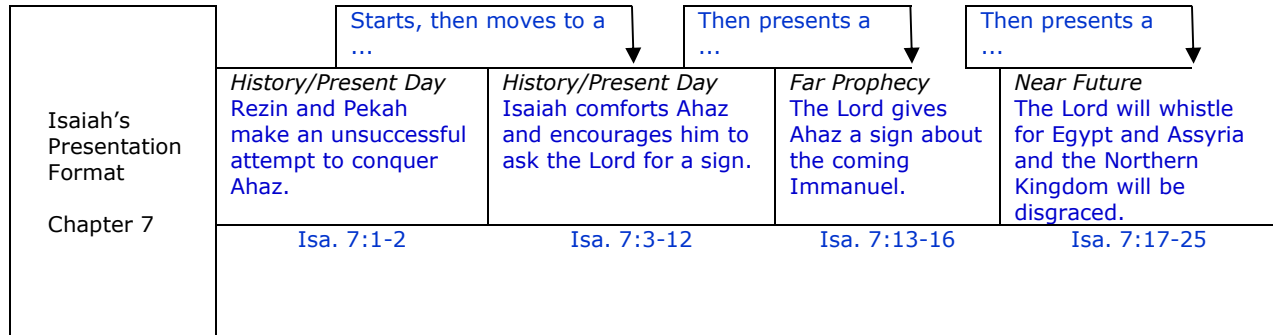


Figure 13: Fourth Vision to Ahaz – Chapter 7

History/Present Day

740 BC - Rezin's Unsuccessful Attack

Isaiah 7:1 Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not conquer it. ² When it was reported to the house of David, saying, "The Arameans have camped in Ephraim," his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.

The odd union of the Northern Kingdom and the country of Aram began at the end of King Jotham's life and culminated in the days of Ahaz. Insight can be gained in the matching Second Kings passage.

2 Kings 15:35 Only the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. He built the upper gate of the house of the LORD. ³⁶ Now the rest of the acts of Jotham and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? ³⁷ In those days the LORD began to

Hebrew Names Their Meanings	
Ahaz	Possessor
Assyria	Country of Assur
Damascus	Activity
Ephraim	Double fruitfulness
Fuller	To whiten
Immanuel	God with us
Jotham	Jehovah is perfect
Pekah	Open-eyed
Remaliah	Adorned by the Lord
Shear-jashub	A remnant shall return
Sheol	The invisible world of departed souls
Tabeel	Good for nothing

Figure 14: Hebrew Names

¹⁷ All Scriptures in this lesson entitled "The Prophecies of Isaiah" are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE, Copyright (C) 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1988, by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

send Rezin king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah. ³⁸ And Jotham slept with his fathers, and he was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; and Ahaz his son became king in his place.

Jotham had tried to remove all the encroaching idol worship in the Southern Kingdom but he had failed to remove the high places of worship that had popped up. As the people of the Southern Kingdom succumb to the temptation of idolatry, the Lord aligns the two nations to the north to form a confederacy to pressure the Southern Kingdom. Here is another example of how the Lord will use an ungodly people for His purposes. Will the confederacy be successful? No. Why does the Lord use them knowing all the while that He will not allow them to be successful? He uses them to strike fear in the hearts of the house of David. All the Southern Kings are direct descendants of David and Ahaz falls in that category. The news has reached his ears. The armies of Aram have entered the Northern Kingdom of Israel, setting up camp in the tribal area of Ephraim which lies adjacent to the northern border of the Southern Kingdom. It is 740 BC and the beginning of Ahaz's reign. About sixteen years have passed since Isaiah's third vision and call to service. Nothing in the book of Isaiah deals with his ministry during the time of Jotham's reign. However, with the union of Israel's troops and those of Aram just a few miles to the north, the Southern Kingdom is visibly disturbed and the Lord is ready for Isaiah to go to work.

History/Present Day

Comforting Words

Isaiah 7:3 Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's field, ⁴ and say to him, 'Take care, and be calm, have no fear and do not be fainthearted because of these two stubs of smoldering firebrands, on account of the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram, and the son of Remaliah. ⁵ 'Because Aram, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has planned evil against you, saying, ⁶ "Let us go up against Judah and terrorize it, and make for ourselves a breach in its walls, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it," ⁷ thus says the Lord GOD, " It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass. ⁸ "For the head of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin (~~now within another 65 years Ephraim will be shattered, so that it is no longer a people~~),¹⁸ ⁹ and the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you will not believe, you surely shall not last.'"

By this time, Isaiah has been married for a while and he has a son. We do not know the age of the son but we do know his name, Shear-jashub, which means a remnant will return. The Lord instructs Isaiah to take his son with him and meet Ahaz at the conduit of the upper pool. When David took over the city of Jerusalem in 1030 BC, he began the process of cutting tunnels or conduits to bring water into the city. These small conduits would channel water underground to supply the city within its walls during times of war and for mere convenience the rest of the time. Pools inside the city were fed by these conduits which include the Pool of Siloam. Water cannot stop flowing for very long or it will become stagnant; therefore, the conduits would channel the water through a series of pools and then flow in different directions to be absorbed into the ground or fed into a river or stream. Thus, the Upper Pool mentioned in this passage was higher than the Lower Pool mentioned in Isaiah 22:9 and 11. In this case, Isaiah is being sent to the pool fed by the Gihon Spring. In this passage, the Lord is instructing Isaiah to meet Ahaz at Gihon Springs where the

¹⁸ Verse 8 is not in the oldest and most reliable manuscripts. Modern translations put it in parenthesis because it an unreliable addition.

Siloam Channel which feeds the Lower Pool. This same conduit or water tunnel is mentioned in Second Samuel 5:8.

2 Samuel 5:8 And David said on that day, "Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him reach the lame and the blind, who are hated by David's soul, through the water tunnel." Therefore they say, "The blind or the lame shall not come into the house."

The Lord tells Isaiah to meet Ahaz at the tunnel where it intersects the highway that goes to the fullers' field. The fullers' field is not a dirt plot as we might think. It is the place in the water where the fullers bleach the garments. Fuller means to whiten. Think of the fuller as the local laundry company down at the water's edge where they use their special soap to whiten the garments. Malachi mentions the fullers soap saying:

Malachi 3:2 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.

At the transfiguration, Mark records:

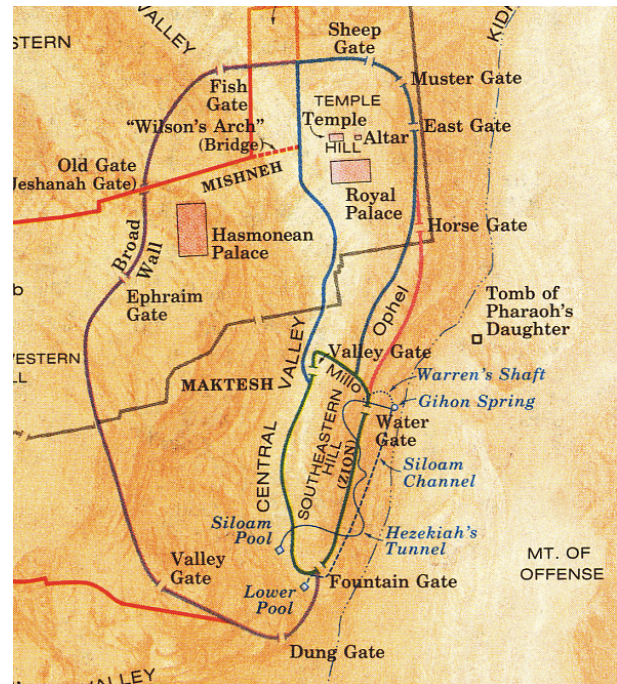
Mark 9:3 and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no fuller on earth can whiten them.

At the work area of the laundry people, Isaiah will find Ahaz deeply discouraged. Ahaz has heard that the two kings to the north have conspired to seize his throne and put Tabeel in his place. Tabeel's name which means good-for-nothing tells the story. He will be a puppet king. The Lord has His own purpose in sending the two kingdoms even though they think they have made the plan on their own. Their plan includes a victory; the Lord's plan does not. He has sent them there only to threaten Ahaz in order to fulfill the rest of Isaiah's fourth vision. Ahaz is not to be afraid of them. Who are they? Rezin is the king of Aram and his capital city is Damascus. Peka, the son of Remaliah is the king of Israel and his capital is Samaria. Even though they seem to be major threats to Ahaz, they are just "stubs of smoldering firebrands" which means that there is nothing left in them to cause damage unless they are fueled and rekindled. Will the Lord fuel and rekindle them? He might; it all depends on Ahaz. Isaiah warns Ahaz, "If you will not believe, you surely shall not last." Belief is so important in every relationship with the Lord. He has sent Isaiah to warn Ahaz and the outcome depends fully on Ahaz's belief. Has the Lord established a junction in history? Could Ahaz's decision really change the course of history and the Lord's plan for the ages? Absolutely not. The Lord knows the heart of Ahaz and uses the northern two nations and Isaiah to keep him on the right path, the Lord's path.

History/Present Day

Ahaz may ask for a sign

Isaiah 7:10 Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make *it* deep as Sheol or high as heaven." ¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!"



Map 5: Gihon Springs and the Siloam Conduit at Jerusalem

The Lord tells Isaiah to prompt Ahaz to ask for a sign. He places no limits on the request; Ahaz can ask anything about all of God's creations from one end to the other. But Ahaz will not ask. Deuteronomy 6:16 says, "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah." Some Bible commentators say that Ahaz did not believe Isaiah's message because he has been prophesying the fall of the Southern Kingdom; however, that is not true. Isaiah has prophesied the fall of the Northern Kingdom to this point and said nothing about the Southern Kingdom. Ahaz's response is proper; therefore, the Lord will bless him with a magnificent sign.

Far Prophecy

Immanuel will come as a sign

Isaiah 7:13 Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? ¹⁴ "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. ¹⁵ "He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows *enough* to refuse evil and choose good. ¹⁶ " For before the boy will know *enough* to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken."

By this time, Ahaz's failure to lead his nation in a godly manner has tested the patience of the Lord, prompting Him to send Rezin and Pekah to deal a deadly blow to the Southern Kingdom in the cities around Jerusalem. Pekah has slain 120,000 persons in Judah in one day and taken 200,000 men, women and children with their possessions into captivity. Rezin has taken Elath, one of Judah's fortified cities and carried all its inhabitants into captivity in Damascus. Had Ahaz been true to the Lord, these two losses would not have occurred. The king had tried the patience of the remaining people of the Southern Kingdom as they awaited his leadership. He had also tried the patience of the Lord. Therefore, the Lord gives a sign that will occur in the far future. "A virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows *enough* to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know *enough* to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken." The child's name will be "God with us" and He will eat curds and honey, the common food of children who lived in a country that is experiencing a time of prosperity. The Lord promises Ahaz, "before the boy will know *enough* to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken." When will this be fulfilled? The Northern Kingdom will come to an end in 722 BC. Aram will end in 64 BC and Immanuel will be born in 4 BC. During that period, the land of the Southern Kingdom will be preserved. In 536 BC, when Cyrus allows the Jews to return to their home, the 12 tribes disbursed across the old Assyrian and Babylonian Empires will return to the land of the Southern Kingdom, not the north. As prophesied, the north is not preserved. Additionally, both Pekah and Rezin will lose their kingdoms. Pekah will be killed by Hoshea and Rezin will be killed by the king of Assyria. In the big picture, this prophecy is fulfilled from every possible angle.

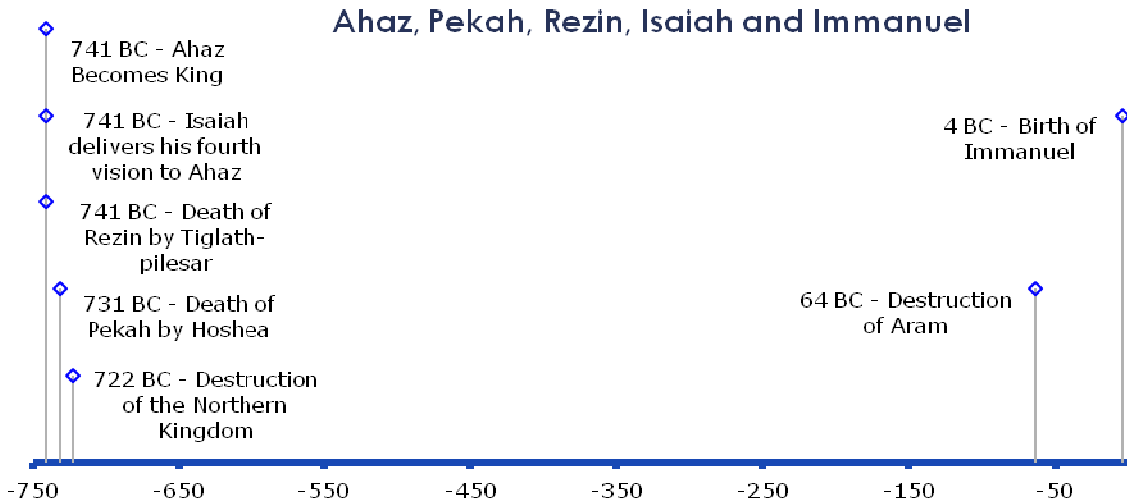


Figure 15: Fulfillment of Isaiah's Prophecy to Ahaz

Near Future

Whistle for Israel

Isaiah 7:17 "The LORD will bring on you, on your people, and on your father's house such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah, the king of Assyria." ¹⁸ And it will come about in that day, that the LORD will whistle for the fly that is in the remotest part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. ¹⁹ And they will all come and settle on the steep ravines, on the ledges of the cliffs, on all the thorn bushes, and on all the watering places.

Even though Isaiah is delivering this prophecy to Ahaz in the Southern Kingdom, the subjects of the Lord's wrath are Ahaz's relatives who live in the Northern Kingdom. He calls them Ephraim because that tribe makes up the largest population of the north. Jacob prophesied Ephraim's strength and numbers on his deathbed in Genesis 48.

Genesis 48:8 When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?" ⁹ And Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." So he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them." ¹⁰ Now the eyes of Israel were so dim from age *that* he could not see. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them. ¹¹ And Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well." ¹² Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground. ¹³ And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him. ¹⁴ But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the first-born. ¹⁵ And he blessed Joseph, and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, ¹⁶ The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth." ¹⁷ When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. ¹⁸ And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the first-born. Place your right hand on his head." ¹⁹ But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also shall become a people and he also shall be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."

²⁰ And he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel shall pronounce blessing, saying, 'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'" Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

The Lord will whistle for the fly and the bee, both of which travel in great numbers. The fly will come from Egypt and the bee from Assyria. Individually, these insects are weak and virtually harmless. In mass, they are deadly. In 722 BC, Assyria and Egypt join forces to eliminate the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom. Because Assyria is the dominant country, Egypt joins her, hoping to continue a great alliance after the destruction of the Southern Kingdom. The strategy is ill-fated. Within 30 years, during the reign of Hezekiah, the Ethiopians or Nubians from Sudan will overthrow Egypt and form the 25th dynasty; Assyria will not support the 24th dynasty and ward off the Ethiopians. At that time, the first black Pharaoh will sit on the Egyptian throne.

Near Prophecy

Disgrace of Israel

Isaiah 7:20 In that day the Lord will shave with a razor, hired from regions beyond the Euphrates (~~that is, with the king of Assyria~~), the head and the hair of the legs; and it will also remove the beard. ²¹ Now it will come about in that day that a man may keep alive a heifer and a pair of sheep; ²² and it will happen that because of the abundance of the milk produced he will eat curds, for everyone that is left within the land will eat curds and honey. ²³ And it will come about in that day, that every place where there used to be a thousand vines, *valued* at a thousand *shekels* of silver, will become briars and thorns. ²⁴ *People* will come there with bows and arrows because all the land will be briars and thorns. ²⁵ And as for all the hills which used to be cultivated with the hoe, you will not go there for fear of briars and thorns; but they will become a place for pasturing oxen and for sheep to trample.

Shaving the legs, head and beard of a man represents the highest insult and disgrace. We have only to look back at David's response to a similar situation to understand the gravity of the humiliation.

2 Samuel 10:⁴ So Hanun took David's servants and shaved off half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle as far as their hips, and sent them away. ⁵ When they told *it* to David, he sent to meet them, for the men were greatly humiliated. And the king said, "Stay at Jericho until your beards grow, and *then* return."

Isaiah's words will give Ahaz an idea. After this prophecy is delivered, Ahaz will take a chance and hire the king of Assyria to thwart the efforts of Pekah and Rezin. It is recorded in Second Kings.

Pekah's Death

2 Kings 15:²⁹ In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria. ³⁰ And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck him and put him to death

Rezin's Death

2 Kings 16:⁷ So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son; come up and deliver me from the hand of the king of Aram, and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are rising up against me." ⁸ And

Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria. ⁹ So the king of Assyria listened to him; and the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and captured it, and carried *the people of* it away into exile to Kir, and put Rezin to death.

After the destruction of the Northern Kingdom by Assyria, most of the people will be taken into exile; however, some of the 10% not taken to Assyria will remain in their land. For centuries, the land has overflowed with cattle. After the destruction, a man who owns just one cow and two sheep will be considered wealthy and held in great esteem. The desolation of the land will be so great that the few cattle in the country will have all the food they need. In the past, the poor people would sell butter and honey in order to purchase all the food they needed to survive. Even though the poor people can still produce butter and gather honey, there are no wealthy people to buy the butter and honey, so the poor people have only the butter and honey to eat. The great vineyards that once sold for 1,000 shekels have no buyers. They will be filled with thorns and briars and the grape vines will be dead. That land will become a place for all sorts of animals to feed upon and live among the thorns and briars. But animals are not the only ones coming to the old overgrown vineyards. People, armed with the lethal weapons of the day such as bows and arrows will come there to hunt. No one will own the land anymore and it will be free range for all comers; however, neither Ahaz nor any people of the Southern Kingdom will go there for fear of the armed hunters, the wild animals or the thorns and briars.

Table 4: Scripture Fulfillment in Isaiah – Chapter 7

Passage	Summary	Time of Fulfillment
Isa. 7:1-2	<i>History/Present Day</i> Rezin and Pekah make an unsuccessful attempt to conquer Ahaz.	Fulfilled in 740 BC.
Isa. 7:3-12	<i>History/Present Day</i> Isaiah comforts Ahaz and encourages him to ask the Lord for a sign.	Fulfilled in 740 BC.
Isa. 7:13-16	<i>Far Prophecy</i> The Lord gives Ahaz a sign about the coming Immanuel.	Fulfilled between 4 BC and 30 BC.
Isa. 7:17-25	<i>Near Future</i> The Lord will whistle for Egypt and Assyria and the Northern Kingdom will be disgraced.	Fulfilled in 722 BC.

Isaiah Chapter 7 is totally fulfilled.