

I. Advent in Biblical Perspective
Isaiah and the Coming of Christ
“The Glory Immanuel—The God of Glory with Us”
Isaiah 7:10–14
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Let’s start by looking at Isaiah 6:1–9a which says [1] *In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. [2] Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. [3] And one called to another and said: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!”*

[4] And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. [5] And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

[6] Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. [7] And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.”

[8] And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said, “Here I am! Send me.” [9a] And he said, “Go.”

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

There was a man in the 18th century named Handel, specifically 1741, being given the assignment and embracing the compilation of passages of Scripture from Psalm, Revelation, but predominately Isaiah all rooted in a key passage which is Isaiah 7:14 which says, [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.*** Immanuel means God with us. It is that passage that became what we now know as The Messiah and selections from this will be sung at our Christmas Festival this year. It is that which motivated me this year to give you Christmas according to Isaiah. What would Isaiah have you to know about Christmas?

There are dozens of prophecies, signs, types and symbols in the Old Testament pointing to the Christ and it’s astounding of how many of them come from the book of Isaiah, specifically the ones we’ll look at in this study. You can’t read Isaiah 7:14 without understanding Isaiah or Isaiah’s deliverance of that promise until you understand that prophetic promise given by this Prophet in the Promised Land. This came at a time that was very much lacking in promise. How many times do we understand the setting of that prophecy in Isaiah as we read or hear sung this passage time and time again around the Christmas season?

There was a man named Handel. There was another man over 2,000 years ago who was a descendent from a long forgotten line of kings, now dispossessed of their kingdom and now by Divine providence having been removed from their kingdoms as their kingdoms are eradicated. This line was the tribe of Judah, the line of David and the man was Joseph. He was a carpenter, a stone mason from a small village on the side of the mountains in the district of Galilee. He is betrothed to one who is also from that long forgotten line of David named Mary.

Word has arrived to Joseph that Mary, who has taken the vows of purity and chastity in the ceremony commitment called betrothal, waiting the ceremony of covenant and then of consummation, is with child. We don't know how Joseph received this news. This man who was of the line of David is now reduced to a carpenter, with no kingdom, no throne and no kingdom to be enthroned upon. Unlike many of his predecessors the Bible tells us in the book of Matthew that he is a righteous man and he is a compassionate man. As a righteous man he knows he must bring Mary the writ of divorce for she has violated the covenant and immorality has entered into their covenant relationship. He is a gracious man so he decides he will not do this publically, but privately.

Joseph's plan is stopped because he received a messenger from the throne of God. The angel informs him that what he supposes is not accurate and that the one he is betrothed to is a virgin. She has been chosen by God to fulfill a long forgotten prophecy, like the long forgotten line of David and the angel quotes from Isaiah 7:14. The angel basically says 'you are to call this One Jesus and this is the fulfillment of the prophecy where the virgin shall conceive.' The miracle is not a virgin birth but that a virgin gives birth by the miracle of a virgin conception. The angel says that Mary will 'bring forth' and that is regal language indicating the virgin will bring forth the King. They will call Him Jesus but He will be called Immanuel – God with us, God one of us, God for us, God among us. If God be for us then who can be against us?

Joseph hears this prophecy over 2,000 years ago and there was a man 800 years before Joseph this man's father's name was Amoz. This man prophesied in Jerusalem to the kingdom of Judah which was made up of the two tribes that had remained faithful to the royal line of David. Those tribes were Benjamin and Judah that was now called the kingdom of Judah. Its capital which was the very city of God was Jerusalem. This is where he ministered to four sons of David who ruled in succession – Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. This Prophet was dispossessed himself. He was rejected by the kings to whom he ministered because of his continual call to their personal repentance. He was not embraced by the people because he kept calling the people who had attempted to syncretize pagan worship with the worship of Yahweh, to repentance as well and his name was Isaiah.

Isaiah now enters into his ministry in the most formidable moments and it is at this moment that God comes down. God peels back the clouds of heaven and gives Isaiah a vision of a throne in Isaiah 6. It is at this moment He calls Isaiah, consecrates and commissions him. Isaiah sees not just the occupation but the preoccupation in God-centered worship where God is lifted up. Notice that in the year king Uzziah dies a King is enthroned and still enthroned, high and lifted up to rule and reign forever. It is that King that Isaiah sees. He sees the sign and symbol of the train and robe of that King and cannot even be contained in the infinitude of this temple. It is filled to overflowing and the smoke of His presence, the Shekinah glory, fills up the temple.

His primary servants, angels, are not just to be messengers but worshippers of the living God and they surround that throne. They are so designed that the joy of their worship will be met with reverence and the reverence is not shown in morbidity but with overflowing joy before the Lord. They cry out with a hymn 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts for the whole earth is filled with His glory.' They are equipped so that they can bring appropriate worship to Him. They have been given six wings – two to cover their eyes lest they look upon Him and perish, two to cover their feet lest they stand in His presence yet they have no standing without Him, then two to stay suspended in the air not only to worship but to be ready to be directed to

go and serve Him as He has so ordained. When they praise Him they have all of the attributes of God to praise Him with.

They can praise Him for His glorious love, His marvelous grace, His patience, His mercy, His righteousness etc. but they descend not to the attributes that are available to Him but they ascend to the one attribute that modifies every attribute. It is the one that not only declares Him pure but that this God is absolutely unique and there is none like Him, beside Him, above Him, or in front of Him. It is not just 'holy' to the normative or the comparative but it is holy to the superlative. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God and thresholds tremble. No one has a closed hymn book or a closed mouth. The hearts of the angels overflow as they call out continually to one another 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Hosts!'

What happens when we see this God in all of His holiness? 'I am lost' says the Prophet Isaiah, 'It's not just kings and people that need to repent for I need to repent. I am an unclean man. I dwell in the midst of an unclean people. I am undone.' This holy God marries His relentless love and grace to His holiness and from an altar which is designed for sacrifice, a burning coal is taken from that altar by a servant of God, placed upon his lips and Gospel News, Good News comes forth – Your sins are forgiven. You are clean. Your sins have been atoned for. Now, who will go for Me to declare My holiness and My grace? The redeemed says 'Here am I, send me' and the God of glory and grace says 'Go!'

His ministry was to Uzziah who is now dead and this King lives but all other kings die. Then Isaiah ministers to Uzziah's son Jotham but we now come to when Isaiah ministers to the grandson of Uzziah, the son of Jotham, still of the line of David and his name is Ahaz. Isaiah is sent by God to meet him with a glorious promise and a dire warning and judgment. This is the backstory. There is a glorious promise in the Promised Land but it is not promising times. Let's look in Isaiah 7.

Isaiah 7:1–3 says [1] *In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. [2] When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim (also known as Kingdom of Israel)," the heart of Ahaz (king of Judah) and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.*

Ahaz was a son of David, who took down a bear, Goliath and the man God used to bring His people to the glory of His name, so how can Ahaz tremble before other kings? But he trembles and when he trembles so do the people. They are full of fear as they shake like trees before the wind. Let's continue.

Isaiah 7:3–9 says [3] *And the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field. [4] And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. [5] Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, [6] "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it," [7] thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand,*

and it shall not come to pass.

[8] *For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin.*

And within sixty-five years

Ephraim will be shattered from being a people.

[9] And the head of Ephraim is Samaria,

and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.

If you are not firm in faith,

you will not be firm at all.'”

Basically Isaiah is telling him that the word of the Lord has just come to you. Ahaz is up checking the water supply for there is a siege coming so he knows they will need food and water. In a sense Isaiah says to him ‘what are you doing here? You don’t need to be here for the word of the Lord has already come to you for that kingdom that is coming will be no more within 65 years from now. Those kings in Syria will be non-existent. These are two smoldering fire stumps so don’t quake in their presence. Do not be fearful for the Lord has promised you.’

Ahaz hears this word but doesn’t leave his reconnaissance for water. So God does something very compassionate. God offers to give him a sign to strengthen his faith. If you’re fearful you will be destroyed but if you’re faith is firm you’ll stand. Your faith is firm only when you see the Object of your faith and it’s not a water supply. The Lord God is the One whom you put your trust in. So now we see the unusual thing that God does here. This is not just an invitation but a command.

Isaiah 7:10 says *[10] Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: [11] “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.”* When God speaks through His Prophets the Prophets are not speaking about God giving a word about God but when they speak God is speaking just as it says here ‘Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz’ which He is doing through Isaiah. That is also why the phrase ‘the Word of the Lord came to me’ is used. God tells Ahaz to ask for a sign with no limits to strengthen his faith. There is something built into this.

The first thing built into this is that we live in a society that says ‘if you have strong faith you will ask for miracles.’ Actually the asking for miracles is the absence of faith or the presence of weak faith. Gideon’s fleece was not a sign of the strength of his faith but it was the sign of the weakness of his faith (Judges 6). But the graciousness of God is that he gave him a sign. So God will give signs, wonders and miracles sometimes for very sovereign purposes and other times to help as an evidence, but you ought not to need it. The fact that God says it ought to be enough, but Ahaz who was still full of fear was not believing.

This is very important because the asking for signs was forbidden because it was seen as putting the Lord to the test. Deuteronomy 6:16 which says *[16] “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test”* is the very text Jesus quoted to Satan in the wilderness. There are only two exceptions that I know of in the Bible. One is the tithe for God says about the tithe to call for our faithfulness in Malachi 3:10, *[10] Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need.* Two is here where He not only invites but commands Ahaz to ask for a sign.

In Deuteronomy the people of Israel are coming through the wilderness after God brought them through a Red Sea. God opened that Red Sea for them to walk through it and then drowned the most might army in the world at that time. Before that God delivered them where their first born did not die in the Passover while His strong hand of judgment with ten plagues including the death of the first born was brought on the Egyptians. When they were going through the wilderness God was with them with a pillar of cloud by day and cloud of fire by night and that cloud was also at the tent of tabernacle where they could see that God was with

them. He also fed them with manna in the wilderness every single day. This is what God had done day after day after day but the people kept asking for a sign. He said it's a worthless generation that asks for a sign or miracle. All you have to do is look at Me. I am with you every day. That is enough and when I speak you believe Me, high and lifted up, while all the kings of this world die.

Here with Ahaz He gives an exception. But Ahaz doesn't do it. Note his vain spirituality. Isaiah 7:12 says *[12] But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test."*

He doesn't put the Lord to the test because he doesn't believe the Lord for Ahaz already has another plan and we see that in other places of Scripture. Ahaz's plan is to get rid of Ephraim and Syria by going above them to this mighty kingdom of fierce warriors and pagan gods to make an alliance with them. He has sent the king of Assyria a note asking they make an alliance and signs it 'your servant King Ahaz.' Ahaz's hope was in the king of Assyria, his water supply and his walls around the city. His faith in what God's Word says is not affirmed and he is not even going to ask for the sign because he already had his plan. Ahaz was going to look to the king of Assyria as his deliverer and salvation. Let's continue.

Isaiah 4:13–25 says *[13] And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that 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] He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. [16] For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted. [17] The LORD will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria!"*

[18] In that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is at the end of the streams of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. [19] And they will all come and settle in the steep ravines, and in the clefts of the rocks, and on all the thornbushes, and on all the pastures.

[20] In that day the Lord will shave with a razor that is hired beyond the River—with the king of Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet, and it will sweep away the beard also.

[21] In that day a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep, [22] and because of the abundance of milk that they give, he will eat curds, for everyone who is left in the land will eat curds and honey.

[23] In that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briers and thorns. [24] With bow and arrows a man will come there, for all the land will be briers and thorns. [25] And as for all the hills that used to be hoed with a hoe, you will not come there for fear of briers and thorns, but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread.

Here we just went to formal language and basically this is what He is saying to them. You will not listen to Me then My patience has now drawn to a close. God is long suffering and patient but there is a time He brings His patience that is designed to bring us to repentance and when we have said no, insulted the Spirit of grace, and trampled under our feet the blood of His covenant then God says 'this day has now been shut.' I will not only remove the house of David but I will bring another King who will have an adopted father from your line and an appointed mother from your line and the virgin shall conceive and bring forth a child. That child is Immanuel. He will arrive in this place but your kingdom will be no more. When this Immanuel comes 800 years from now He will be born where there is no kingdom of Judah, Israel, Syria but

only those I have whistled for – bees and flies who I will bring from Egypt and Assyria. Assyria will not only dispossess this royal line but he will take your manhood from you as the razor hits. This one that you think will deliver you will own you, him and his pagan gods. Then he will be conquered as I whistle forth another king.

The king of Babylon will come down from the same area of Assyria and Judah will be no more. Then will come the Medo-Persians, then Greece, then Rome and by the time this sign is fulfilled, My Sign will come for the virgin shall conceive. Bring forth the royal King Immanuel – God with us. When He arrives you will be dispossessed and there will be no kingdom. The one enthroned is a pretender who is Herod the Great. That is what he will see in that day. Rich vines will go down to nothing. A thousand shekels will go down to two. The land flowing with milk and honey will only have curds. You will live under My hand of discipline and judgment.

Your fearfulness is here because of your faithlessness, but I tell you 800 years from now and like every prophecy that is long term, there is a short term fulfillment in which Ephraim and Syria are gone and the one to whom you look for will become the instruments I will use to bring judgment upon you. I'd like to give you Isaiah's Christmas takeaways, the backstory of this prophecy.

Number one, is plan B. There is no plan B. I have one and that is to preach the Gospel until someone pries my hands off some pulpit to bury me. I'm not going to stop sharing the Gospel no matter where I am. I have one plan and it's called the Great Commission. I have one Message and it's called the Gospel. I only have one King and I am not dependent on the president, the Supreme Court or any other alliances. They may want to ally and I'll send the ambassadors to the White House, the Congress or wherever but they are not my alliances. We have a King and see Him high and lifted up. It is this King, His Message, His victory that He has secured at His cross that He has announced with His empty tomb. That is the only plan I have. I call upon you to put your confidence in only One Person and that plan is His plan and we follow His Word.

It doesn't make sense to the world. For instance, what I am doing right now the world call's foolishness but I'll keep preaching. [21] *For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe*, I Corinthians 1:21. So God's plan we will follow. Yes, I would like for the Supreme Court to bless this nation by passing a law about the right view of marriage but we don't have to wait for them to pass an edict or law for we can build marriage through one man, one woman for one life rooted in the Gospel and proclaiming the Gospel with its humility and its courage, its compassion and conviction. These marriages can be built right in the church of Jesus Christ and sent into every single community. I don't have to wait for a law to walk into a classroom and pray as long as it's King Jesus that I look to with words and tone that honor that King. I'm grateful for all of them because I love for a nation to be blessed with sensible policies but we have no alliances or plan B.

We only have one plan and that is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ knowing that that King who came here to save us is the King who sends His Spirit who indwells us. He will never leave us nor forsake us.

Secondly, is idolatry. Do not let idolatry creep into your life. It is very easy for even the good things that God tells us to love like a spouse, a family to be put in front of, above, or alongside of God. Isaiah wants us to know that God sent Immanuel because the idols of this world not only cannot deliver you but they usually end up devouring you. Not only did Assyria not deliver Judah and God's covenant people but the king of Assyria ended up devouring Israel

and Judah. Idols all fall and break their arms but before they fall they will devour you if your trust is in them. Idols always have their inevitable ends.

Please pray for me. Whatever means God has given me I want to use but I will pray for you that we will enjoy all of God's good gifts but we have only one God to worship and in whom we trust.

Thirdly, to be faithful means fearless. If you're not faithful then you become fearful and that's where Ahaz was. Should you pray for more faith? It's okay but I'm asking you not to focus on how big is your faith but where is your faith. With just a little faith if it's in the right One you can thrash down mountains. So I do pray we have big faith but my bigger concern is where my faith is.

Isaiah is willing to risk his life in front of Ahaz by giving this word that is nonsensical to Ahaz but Isaiah gives that promise because Isaiah has seen the Lord high and lifted up and it is that God who will deliver you. These kings die but this King is the King forever. It is that King who left that throne to come through that virgin to go to a cross to save us and has ascended back onto that throne and says 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth so go and make disciples...' There is your message and your plan.

You have a God who is holy but a God who will give His own Son on that altar to give that burning coal to save us from our sins that we can have everlasting life. He is risen and He is within us.

The reason I long for God-centered, participatory, Trinitarian worship every Lord's Day is I want you to get a glimpse of how great your God is so that when you leave here that God goes with you. I'm not trying to get Him down to a size that you feel comfortable with Him. I want you to be uncomfortable like Isaiah and that now you are totally resting on that God to make you right with Him. It is Him getting you to the size that He wants you because He is in you. It is that God in that throne who dwells in your heart. When that God is in your heart fear is banished.

Of whom shall I be afraid? Immanuel – God is with us. He is one of us, among us and He is for us. If He be for us then who can be against us? Immanuel – the virgin brought forth the King. Bring forth the royal Diadem, Immanuel. He is with you and until you go to be with Him you are not walking through red states, blue states or simply the United States or other countries. We are walking through Immanuel's ground for it belongs to my King and I want everyone in this world to belong to that King and in their faith – little or big – is in their God. There is none like Him – holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. We rejoice as men and women purchased by the Lamb, our King Immanuel. We thank You and praise You. My simple invitation is that if you are reading this realize that any other thing you put your trust in will not deliver you. It will devour you and it brings nothing but death but there is a Savior. Your spouse, your marriage, your children nor your job can save you but there is a Savior. When He saves you He'll send you to a spouse, to a children, not with the weight of them trying to be your savior but with you bringing the weight of glory and praise to them because you have a Savior, Jesus. Please come to Him. You can contact us at Briarwood at (205) 776-5200 if you want to pray with someone. Today if you're a believer and you want to pray with someone call us as well. Immanuel, see Him. Even inanimate objects like thresholds tremble in His presence. We

tremble yet with joy for this Immanuel has defeated not just kings of Ephriam and Syria but all of our enemies. We have life in Him for I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Power Point

Life Takeaways from Isaiah

I. Plan B?

II. Idolatry—Its Inevitable End

III. Faithful and Fearless