

Signs of His Presence

1. Have you ever been in an impossible situation, where you wish you could just hide and make it go away? Please explain.

The political situation that Judah faced in the days of Ahaz, King of Judah, was extremely complicated. During the reign of Jotham, father of Ahaz, the Northern Kingdom (Israel, sometimes called Ephraim) and Aram (Syria), became subject to Assyria—the world power of that day. The Assyrian threat prompted the kings of Aram and Israel to form a major anti-Assyrian coalition, drawing in Judah, if possible. When Ahaz refused to join them, the two kings tried to force Judah to cooperate. This led to a large-scale invasion (2 Kings 16:5-6; 2 Chronicles 28:5-21). In the midst of these distressing circumstances, Ahaz appealed to Assyria for help (2 Kings 16:7-8). Chapters 7-12 of Isaiah recount Isaiah's efforts to confront and counsel the king.

A brief introduction to the historical setting is provided in Isaiah 7:1-9. **Read** these verses carefully. (Note: verse 2 precedes verse 1 chronologically.) This prophecy of Isaiah is datable to 735 B.C. Locate the regions of Aram, Israel, Judah and Assyria on the map. The Timeline will also help you orient yourself. Becoming familiar with these kings and nations, and the historical events will help open up the next few chapters for you.

Invitation to Pray: Mighty Lord, teach us how to stand firm in our faith, to increasingly trust in Your character, and hold You in reverence and awe as we should.

2. a. What danger is threatening King Ahaz and the people of Judah at this time (7:5-6)?

b. What image is used by Isaiah to describe the terror of the people of Jerusalem, including the king?
3. The king was probably inspecting the water supply, in anticipation of an attack, when God sent Isaiah to meet Ahaz. What is the significance in Isaiah being accompanied by his son? (Consider the meaning of his name).
4. Of what was Isaiah reminding Ahaz, when referring to Judah as the "House of David" (2 Samuel 7:11-13)?

5.
 - a. How does God want Ahaz to respond to the threat of invasion? Look at several translations.
 - b. What is the basis of Isaiah's counsel to remain calm?
 - c. What is the point of discussing the various "heads" in relation to the head of Judah?
 - d. God issues a clear warning to Ahaz in 7:9c. Reflect on the meaning of this phrase; then write out your interpretation. (Also consider 2 Chronicles 28:1-5.)

Ahaz is faced with the fundamental questions of faith: *Is God more powerful than the armies of these nations? Are His promises of protection true? Will Ahaz trust in God or in strong people? Will he exercise faith or resort to works?* The moment of decision is about to come. His choice will affect the future of his dynasty—the house of David—from whom the promised Messiah would come.

Continue **reading** Isaiah chapter 7, beginning with verse ten, and continue through 8:22. Pay close attention to Isaiah 8:18. This verse is a key to understanding the meaning of events and prophecies in this section. Also observe references to "in that day" (defined in lesson 3).

6.
 - a. Why do you think God instructed Ahaz to ask for a sign? (Compare Exodus 3:12; Isaiah 37:30; Jeremiah 44:29-30.) Note the language God uses.
 - b. Why was it wrong for Ahaz not to ask for a sign?
 - c. How does Ahaz' refusal serve as a warning to you?

7. How does the phrase “your God” (v.11), and “my God” (v.13), signal a change in Ahaz’ relation to God?

Signs were immediate, physical confirmations that what a prophet had predicted farther in the future would indeed happen. Even though the king refused to ask for a sign, the Sovereign Lord would give Ahaz and the house of David a sign that He was with His people. Chapters 7 and 8 contain a sequence of prophetic signs that are based on the names of three children. It is the *meaning* of these names that is important.

8. Use the references below and other Bible study aids to discover the meaning of each sign (name). Then summarize the truth that each sign conveys to Ahaz and the people of Judah, during this dark time. (Note: one sign has both a near and far fulfillment.)
The Sign of Shear-Jashub (7:3)

The Sign of Immanuel (Isaiah 7:10-17, 8:8; Matthew 1:23)

The Sign of Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (8:1-4)

9. Why might God have given such a major messianic prediction at this time?
10. a. It has been said: “whatever we rely on instead of trusting in God will eventually turn and devour us.” How was this true for Ahaz and Judah? (Refer to Isaiah 7:17-25, 8:21-22; 2 Chronicles 28: 20-23.) Be specific.
- b. Can you share a personal example of this principle? (The results of choosing your own way, as well as God’s way).

11. In what current circumstances do you need to “stand firm in your faith?”

12. What would it mean in practice to trust the Lord in this situation? (Trust involves patience, courage, confidence in God, and wholehearted belief in the promises of God’s Word).

To consistently lean on God alone we must *know Him*. Nothing is more vital to our Christian life than knowing God (Jeremiah 9:23-24; John 17:3).

13. a. What do you learn about God’s character and methods from the way he dealt with Ahaz, Judah, and the nations? Include references.

- b. What is God saying to you personally through this passage? You may also want to consider questions eleven and twelve.

14. What did Ahaz fail to remember about God (Isaiah 6:3, 8:13)?

“From the time of Ahaz there never was again a ‘house of David’ in the true sense but only a line of puppet, pretend-kings under alien domination until, at the exile, even they disappeared into the sand of history never to re-emerge.” Motyer

A godly remnant of Jews kept the nation alive so the Messiah could be born.

15. How has “Immanuel’s” personal holy presence been apparent to you in recent times?