

Jesus is Our Life

December 18, 2022

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Isaiah 7:10-17

Session Outline

1. The Offer (Isaiah 7:10-12)
2. The Sign (Isaiah 7:13-16)
3. The Answer (Isaiah 7:17)

Theological Theme

In one of the darkest times in the history of Judah, God promised to give them a sign of His faithful commitment to deliver them through the coming birth of His Son Jesus. At the right time and as predicted, God showed His love for us by sending Jesus to be Immanuel, God is with us.



Leader Guide

Jesus is Our Life

Introduction

We all need confirmation at some point in our lives. Have you ever had trouble with a purchase or reservation and couldn't find the confirmation information? Maybe you were trying to access a plane reservation or verify the shipping information on a purchase you made but hadn't received. It can be frustrating to say the least, and in our world of online buying and ordering, confirmation messages are incredibly important.

If you have ever suffered from not having the exact details needed, then you probably learned the hard way to value confirmations. Assurances of purchase are not the only way that we need confirmation. Strong relationships usually involve confirmation along the way to keep each person confident in the other. Our kids need a lot of confirmation as they grow and mature. Confirmation at your work is valuable in how secure you feel in your current position. We appreciate confirmation in things that are important to us, and we value when it is received.

- ❓ When have you struggled because you couldn't access certain confirmation information?
- ❓ What are some other places in your life where confirmation is valuable?
- ❓ Why do you think we desire confirmation so much?

Session Summary

Just as He said, God had not forgotten His promises to the people and declared that His plan to deliver them would come about when His Son Jesus came to earth and was born of a virgin. These verses are a great reminder to us today that though times may be tough in this world, God has not forgotten His people. He sent Jesus to earth as Immanuel, God with us, and He is always present. God did not and will not abandon His people. That is the hope we celebrate this Christmas season that can take us through the coming year no matter what difficult things may arise. When you are tempted to rely on or trust in earthly leaders, be reminded that you can always count on God. The Lord is the true source of the strength and power you need for whatever you face.

1. The Offer (Isaiah 7:10-12)

With the situation in his country on shaky and uncertain ground, King Ahaz faced the choice of who to trust. Should he form an alliance with the Assyrians or trust in the Lord? As a leader, he likely heard from people on both sides of the question. The people had suffered and were dealing with some tough circumstances that resulted from their own disobedience and lack of faith in God. They were desperate and looking for help. As many of us know, when you are desperate—weak and searching for answers—you can be vulnerable to listening to the wrong voices.

God knew the situation and He offered to prove His presence and power to the people by granting Ahaz the request of a sign. God gave opportunity for confirmation to this struggling king. Think about the offer. God literally told Ahaz to ask for a sign with no limits. He was challenging Ahaz to believe and trust in Him. Sometimes we find ourselves in a similar position where we struggle to trust that God is with us. Think about the love God felt for His people to make that offer. He wanted to bless them though they were dealing with situations of their own making.



When have you struggled with trusting and believing God instead of the circumstances you could see?

When we read that Ahaz refused to test God, you may see that as a sign of spiritual depth or strength, but it was actually the opposite. Ahaz was worried that if he asked for a sign for God then he would get the confirmation. Once confirmation was received, then Ahaz would be obligated to believe God, and it would limit the choices he could make with earthly solutions. Ahaz knew enough about God to realize God would use that situation to reveal the truth to Him. He wasn't sure he wanted to trust God that much. Think about how God has strengthened your faith over the years. Every time you have believed Him, obeyed Him, and stepped out in faith, God has held you up. Every step of faith that you take makes the next step of faith a little easier because God always comes through.

Some might think it would have been wrong to test God in any way. Yes, Matthew 4:7 tells us not to test the Lord, but when God Himself tells you to test Him, then obedience to the Lord should take precedence. It is not improperly testing God to obey what He says. Obedience to God leads to a blessed life, even if the blessing looks different than we expect. Though this is clear throughout Scripture, many times people find themselves like Ahaz, refusing to allow God to bless them with His promise and protection. It makes no sense that Ahaz would trust in human leaders over the Sovereign Lord, and it makes no sense for us to either.

 How have you ever tested God or received confirmation from the Lord about a situation you were facing?

It may be easy for us to see the folly in Ahaz's decision making. Yet, how often have we refused to accept a gift from the Lord? There have likely been times when God wanted to bless us, and we chose poorly. Maybe like Ahaz, we weren't willing to trust God's plan and wanted to keep our other options on the table. What is God asking you to trust Him about and you are hesitating because it would take away your other options? Ahaz was afraid to put his whole faith in God even though he knew God was able to do anything. He wanted to keep his reliance on people and things he felt like he could control. Too many people who call themselves Christians but place their faith in making alliances with earthly people in power instead of obeying God and following His plans. It is wise to look at Ahaz and recognize the similar tendencies we have so that we can move forward differently and in alignment with the will of God for our lives.

 Application: What do you need to obey God about instead of trusting in earthly answers?

2. The Sign (Isaiah 7:13-15)

Ahaz refused God's offer of confirmation and passed it off as not wanting to test God when really, he didn't want to rely on God. When someone chooses to rely on other people instead of God it shows that they distrust the Lord. Isaiah called out that distrust in Ahaz. He compared Judah's rulers' poor treatment of other people with their poor treatment of God by not trusting Him. It wearies the Lord God when His people refuse to trust Him. How is it possible for us to say God is omniscient and omnipotent and then turn around and rely on fallible and weak humans instead of trusting Him to guide our steps? No wonder the prophet described this behavior as causing the Lord to be weary.

Think about times when you have tried to help people make better choices when they have been caught up in destructive behavior. Maybe loved ones have been addicted to something or delusional about their life direction. You can see how their focus is leading them straight toward destruction, and yet they ignore your warnings and offerings of help. When you love people, you want the best for them even when they don't seem to want it for themselves. It is exhausting to try and help those who refuse to act. You can quickly become weary and throw your hands up in the air. God knew the future destruction the people were headed toward, and He alone could do something about it.

 Many of us know refusing godly help is foolish. Why is it still often tempting to rely on ourselves or others over God?

The Promised Child

Matthew 1:22–23 states that the birth of Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. However, one must not conclude from this that the ancient Immanuel prophecy refers exclusively to Jesus. The circumstances surrounding the prophecy demand a more immediate fulfillment as well. The context of Isaiah 7:14 indicates that a child would be born in the days of Ahaz who would serve as a sign to that generation of God's providential control of international events and of His people's destiny. This child, who was a sign of God's presence with His people, foreshadowed Jesus, who is "God with us" in the fullest possible sense.

Isaiah followed his declaration of disgust at Ahaz's choice with one of the most famous prophecies in all of Scripture regarding the birth of Jesus Christ. It is as if he was saying that the unbelief of man would not negate the promises of God and the love God has for His people. The distrust of Ahaz might weary God, but it did not change the plan that God had for the redemption of the world. So, Isaiah announced that the Lord Himself would give a sign, and it was going to be significant. This prophecy encompasses the good will of God toward Israel in general and the house of David specifically. It is important to note that this prophecy would have short term and ultimate fulfillment. Ahaz would see the fulfillment of the prophecy through a child born in his time, but ultimately, this prophecy would be fulfilled by the true and lasting Immanuel, Jesus. Though the people were living in difficult circumstances, they were never forsaken by the Lord. The same is true for His people today. Even when you feel you don't deserve Him or that you have made God weary with your lack of faith, He will never leave you or forsake you.



How does it encourage and challenge you that the Lord will never forsake you regardless of your circumstances?

The prophecy given through Isaiah stated that the awaited Messiah would be born of a virgin. Bringing Jesus to earth through a virgin signified both the divine power and divine purity of His arrival. Although He was to be a man, He would not be like any other man. He would not be stained by things of the world and would be set apart from the ways of man. He was to be called Immanuel meaning, "God is with us." We allow fear into our lives when we get fixated on our circumstances and take our eyes off God. Ahaz knew the Lord had the power to help His people, but Ahaz had become focused onto the wrong things and let fear take root. Once that happened, he also found himself believing security and help could be found in earthly kings instead of the King of Kings Himself.

Regardless of Ahaz's actions, he still led the beloved people of God, so the Lord offered assurance and encouragement through the prophet Isaiah. This prophecy had a near fulfillment and a far fulfillment. The near application of it was about Ahaz and the attacks they were enduring. God used this prophecy as a sign that within a few years they would receive deliverance. The far fulfillment is about the announcement of the miraculous virgin birth of Jesus Christ. Matthew 1:23 reiterates the same words and reinforces the prophecy of the virgin birth as well as uses the name Immanuel, God is with us. For a people who did not yet have the gift of the Holy Spirit or free access to their Holy God, the concept of God being with them was significant. We have only known a world post Jesus's birth and the indwelling of the Spirit. We may tend to take that access for granted whereas they would've struggle to understand what it would be like to have "God with us."

 Application: What does “God is with us” mean to you? How might you have taken that access to God for granted?

3. The Answer (Isaiah 7:16-17)

The prophecy also included assurance that the evil princes who were terrorizing Judah were facing a time limit from God. He specified that before the child—not Jesus but Ahaz’s own child—grew two or three years old those two kings would be destroyed and their land forsaken. It is one thing to be told you are not alone when you are under attack; it’s another thing to be promised your enemies, who have been tormenting you, will be destroyed themselves. Imagine how it encouraged Ahaz in that moment to be told about the coming birth of the child and the coming destruction of his enemies.

 How do you think it affected Ahaz to hear both those pieces of news at the same time?

Leading people who are hurting in continually uncertain times is difficult at best. Any good news would be well-received and likely be a strong motivator to press on. Sometimes when things are tough, it is easy to get focused on the negative and start believing everything is bad all the time. The truth is that there are always good things and bad things happening in our lives simultaneously. If we focus only on the hard stuff and the possible attacks coming our way, we might feel desperate and hopeless. If we focus on the promised Messiah, the presence of God with us, and rely on Him for our strength, we will see opportunities around us and experience growing faith as we depend on the Lord more fully.

 How have you noticed your focus on good or bad circumstances affecting the rest of your life?

Just as God promised, those two lands were bereft of their kings within the next few years. The captives they had taken were released to come back as seen in 2 Chronicles 28:8-15. Hope is a powerful encourager, and we can learn from this account the value it plays in our lives. We are never forsaken by the Lord, even when we experience the consequences from our own disobedience. God’s promises are all true, and He cannot fail to keep them because it would go against His character. Ahaz demonstrated how not to respond when God calls, but his story also encourages us to place our faith, trust, and reliance on God alone and not on earthly people who will let us down.

We are also reminded that God is a just God. His promise to the House of David would stand, but He also threatened severe judgment, and none were immune from those consequences. He stressed that those in power who disobey God would bring punishment down on themselves and

their offspring for generations. The longer men continued in their sin and disobedience, the greater the consequences they would face. Think about the shock Ahaz may have felt when Isaiah mentioned that the judgment he would face would come from the hands of the very ones he had trusted instead of the Lord.

It is ironic that often the person or thing we rely on instead of the Lord will often be what causes us to suffer. Consider the activity or behavior that you use as an escape, a distraction, or to feel better about yourself. It is those people or things that we place before the Lord in our lives that become idols. Those idols lead us even farther away from the Lord and can become bondage to us. Sin is always deceiving and often leads to places of destruction we never saw coming. When we ignore our need for God and trust in anything other than Him, we are disobeying Him and showing our lack of faith. This is wearying to the Lord and dangerous for His people.

-  Application: How have you disobeyed God by turning to someone or something other than Him? What will you do differently now?

Conclusion

-  Where is God calling you to turn from trusting in the things of the world to trust Him fully?
-  How can we encourage one another as a group to continually focus on Jesus, our Immanuel?
-  Who in your life needs to know Jesus is “Immanuel”? How will you seek to share with them?

Prayer of Response

Thank the Lord for keeping His promises and loving you enough to send Jesus to earth to save you from your sins. Ask for wisdom to see how and when you tend to rely on anything other than the Lord. Confess and repent of those times.

Additional Resources

- *The God Who Is with Us* by Ronnie Martin
- *Isaiah Chapter 1-35* by J. Vernon McGee
- *Isaiah* by Paul Wegner

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



DxD This Week

Call to Action

Are you trusting in Jesus or something else for your well-being? Do you regularly experience Jesus in your daily life? Who in your life needs to know that Jesus is THEIR “Immanuel”?

For Next Week

Memorize

Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.

- Isaiah 7:14

Historical Context of Isaiah

Purpose

Isaiah's message is relatively simple. First, Isaiah accused God's people of sin: rebelling against the one who made them and redeemed them. Second, Isaiah instructed these sinners to reform their ways and act obediently. Third, Isaiah announced God's judgment on the people because of their sin. Finally, God revealed his future restoration of the people, or at least of the faithful remnant that survived the judgment. As part of the restoration of God's people, Isaiah foresaw both judgment on the nations (chaps. 13–23) and a future turning of the nations to God (2:1–4). The first part of the book (chaps. 1–39) emphasizes sin, the call to repentance, and judgment; the second part (chaps. 40–66) emphasizes the hope of restoration.

Author

The book presents itself as the writing of one man, Isaiah son of Amoz. The superscription to the book dates his prophetic activity as spanning the reigns of four kings of Judah: Uzziah (783–742 BC, Isaiah's call is dated to this king's last year, 6:1); Jotham (742–735 BC); Ahaz (735–716 BC); and Hezekiah (716–686 BC). On Uzziah (Azariah) see 2Kg 15:1–7; 2Ch 26:1–23. On Jotham see Kg 15:32–38; 2Ch 27:1–9. On Ahaz see 2Kg 16:1–20; 2Ch 28:1–27. On Hezekiah see 2Kg 18:1–20:21; 2Ch 29:1–32:33. Not much is known about Isaiah apart from his prophecy.

Isaiah's authorship of the whole book has been vehemently contested in the modern period. Many scholars have argued that the historical Isaiah could not have written chaps. 40–66. For those who believe that God knows the future and can reveal it to his servants, it is not problematic that God through Isaiah predicted the rise of Babylon, its victory against Judah, the exile, and the return.

Setting

Uzziah's reign was a particularly prosperous time in the history of Judah, but storm clouds were on the horizon. Assyria was on the rise again in the person of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BC). The Assyrian king threatened to engulf Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel. After the death of Tiglath-pileser, his successors, Shalmaneser and Sargon, defeated the northern kingdom in 722 BC and deported its citizens. This event brought Judah even more under the shadow of that great empire. Isaiah 37:38 suggests that the prophet lived until the death of Sennacherib in 681 BC.

Special Features

Isaiah was an eighth-century BC prophet. His book is the first of the Prophets in the English canon and the first of the Latter Prophets in the Hebrew canon. Isaiah is powerful in its poetic imagination, intriguing in its prophetic vision, and complex in its structure. One can never read or study the book without gaining new insights into the nature of God and our relationship with him. The authors of the New Testament read the book of Isaiah in light of the coming of Christ and realized that this prophet anticipated Messiah's coming with remarkable clarity. For this reason they quoted or alluded to Isaiah more than any other Old Testament book.

Extended Commentary

Isaiah 7:10-17

7:10–11 The purpose of a sign was to give Ahaz even more reason to have confidence in God rather than Assyria to rescue him from Rezin and Pekah. Sheol refers to the underworld.

7:12 From Isaiah's reaction, the reader can discern that Ahaz's reply, which on the surface seems pious, was actually impious. The king seemed to cite scriptural precedent (Dt 6:16), but the law prohibited the type of rebellious testing that took place at Massah (Ex 17:1–7), not a test offered by a true prophet of the Lord. It may be that Ahaz had already decided to call on Assyria for help.

7:13 The use of my God in this verse instead of "your God," as in v. 11, shows that Ahaz's lack of faith was a turning point in his life. Isaiah's reference to him as house of David shows also that it would impact the Davidic dynasty, spelling its decline.

7:14 The context indicates that the preliminary fulfillment of this sign must have taken place within a few years of its utterance—the time between a child's conception and his knowing right from wrong (vv. 15–16), traditionally at age twelve. The Hebrew word translated virgin means "young woman of marriageable age" and often has the implication of virginity. Thus many scholars feel that the referent is a woman whom Isaiah would marry and, if so, then the birth is mentioned in 8:1–4. This may be the immediate fulfillment of this sign. But its ultimate and more exalted fulfillment is noted in Mt 1:23 as it cites the more specific Greek word found in the Septuagint, parthenos, which means "virgin." Immanuel means "God is with us."

7:15 The first phrase could also be translated, "In order to learn," meaning that hardship will motivate the child to turn to God. The significance of eating curds and honey is that the devastation of the land's agriculture (vv. 23–24) will be such that other foods will not be available.

7:16 The Aramean kingdom of Rezin was destroyed in 732 BC. Tiglath-pileser reduced the size of the northern kingdom of Pekah in 733 BC, and the king was assassinated and replaced by Hoshea. Even so, the northern kingdom was totally defeated in 722 BC, about thirteen years after the Immanuel prophecy.

7:17 It was not just Syria and the northern kingdom that would experience Assyrian devastation. Judah would also experience God's punishment. As later events showed, paying Tiglath-pileser to take care of Ahaz's northern problem was not the smartest strategy. From that point on Ahaz paid a heavy tribute as Assyria's vassal (2Kg 16:10–18).¹

References

1. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).

Author Bio

Ronnie Martin (The God Who is With Us)

Ronnie Martin is the founder and lead pastor of Substance Church in Ashland, Ohio. Before pastoring, he recorded eleven full-length albums as part of the influential Tooth and Nail roster. As a speaker, Ronnie has spoken at several conferences, and he co-hosts the Happy Rant Podcast and The Art of Pastoring Podcast. Ronnie has written or co-written several other books, including Finding God in the Dark, Stop Your Complaining, The Bridezilla of Christ, and The Best Gift Ever Given.

J. Vernon McGee (Isaiah Chapters 1-35)

Dr. J. Vernon McGee (1904-1988) spent more than 50 years teaching the Bible on his “Thru the Bible” radio broadcast. He pastored for more than 40 years and has authored many best-selling books, including Doctrine for Difficult Days.

Paul Wegner (Isaiah)

Paul D. Wegner (PhD, Kings College, University of London) is distinguished professor of Old Testament at Gateway Seminary, Ontario, California, with a specialty in the study of Isaiah. He taught at Phoenix Seminary for eleven years and, before that, at Moody Bible Institute for nearly thirteen years. He is the author of A Student’s Guide to Textual Criticism, The Journey from Texts to Translations, Using Old Testament Hebrew in Preaching and An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35.