

# THE MILLENNIUM FORECAST

*The Book of Isaiah*

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Text

Isaiah 7:1-25

Topic

Bad King Ahaz refuses God's help

Title

***"The King Ahaz Virgin Of The Bible"***

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## **Would you go to a physician whose failure rate was 70%?**

Probably not. But 42mil Americans receive psychotherapy annually. Therapy achieves a success rate of 30% *or less*, no matter the method.

That doesn't mean you shouldn't talk to someone.

Patients report, and research bears out, that talking to friends helps more than therapy.<sup>1</sup>

## **If a friend is your best source of help, go to your best friend.**

Jesus said, "No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you **friends**" (John 15:15).

Our friend is a "wonderful counselor" (Isaiah 9:6). No matter that He ascended into Heaven. He promised, "Behold, I am always with you, to the end of the age" (Matthew

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.psychreg.org/why-most-psychotherapies-equally-ineffective/>

28:20). He keeps His promise by giving us "The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father... [sent] in My name" (John 14:26).

God the Holy Spirit lives in us. He empowers us to obey God's Word. He communicates with us discerning between our soul and our spirit. No one else can be so intimate.

Nobody knows you the way Jesus does. He formed you in your mother's womb. All of the hairs of your head are individually numbered. He collects your tears in a bottle. He is doing a work in you and has promised that He will complete it, with or without your full cooperation.

Nothing formed against you will prosper. You can count on everything working together for the good.

Death and the grave have no power over you. If you resist the devil, he flees from you.

The Lord knows everything you are going through and feeling. He is touched by your infirmities. He prays for you.

The psalmist knew where a believer's help comes from. "From whence comes my help? My help *comes* from the LORD, Who made Heaven and Earth" (Psalm 121:1-2).

King Ahaz of Judah was about to be invaded by Syria and Israel. He was endangered by Assyria. Where would he look for help?

### **Where am I looking for help? Where are you?**

I'll organize my comments around two points, **#1 The Lord Is Out To Help You**, and **#2 The World Is Out To Harm You**.

#### **#1 - The Lord Is Out To Help You (v1-9)**

We are introduced to the next, the 12<sup>th</sup>, king of Judah, Ahaz. He's a guy that makes you feel like you need a shower after being around him. He was serious about idol worship:

- He sacrificed his son to the idol Molech.

- He defiled the Temple in Jerusalem by removing the articles used for worship and replacing them with pagan altars.

He never repented. When he died, "he was not placed in the tombs of the kings of Israel" (Second Chronicles 28:27).

Isa 7:1 Now it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, *that* Rezin king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to *make* war against it, but could not prevail against it.

The Assyrian Empire was expanding its territory and exerting pressure on Judah's neighboring kingdoms. In 735BC, Ahaz learned that Syria and Israel had formed an alliance. They planned to depose Ahaz in order to force Judah to join their coalition.

Isaiah was sent by God to reassure Ahaz that he did not need to fear the invading armies. God would protect Judah.

Ahaz, an apostate idolater, rebuffed the LORD's help.

Syria and Israel "went up to Jerusalem to *make* war against it, but could not prevail against it." Verse one is a short summary of this episode. Beginning in verse two, Isaiah will present the detailed account.

Isa 7:2 And it was told to the house of David, saying, "Syria's forces are deployed in Ephraim." So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind.

"Ephraim" is another name for the northern kingdom of Israel.

The "house of David" is the Davidic Covenant. It was an unconditional covenant made between God and King David. God promised that He would establish a dynasty of kings from David's descendants, and that his kingdom would be established forever.

Jesus has made a bunch of unconditional promises to you. Read John 14-17 and note some of them. Always be on the lookout for them, marker in hand, ready to underline.

Ahaz was fearfully focused on troop deployment. He felt caught in a terrible windstorm that would most certainly uproot him.

Isa 7:3 Then the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son, at the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller's Field,

It was sound strategy to protect the water supply of walled cities. You'd stand no chance in a siege without adequate water. You'd last less than a week if you didn't surrender.

It must have been a 'Go to work with dad' day.

Shear-Jashub is a compound word, meaning a *remnant shall return*. Whether this was his name, or a nickname, his presence communicated a major theme of his dad's ministry. God always has a remnant.

A couple of things about Shear-Jashub:

1. What 'name' would people give you, that describes your message from God?
2. Kids should not be overlooked, but encouraged from a young age to seek and serve the Lord.

Isa 7:4 and say to him: 'Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria, and the son of Remaliah.

The Syria-Israel alliance looked like an approaching fire that would consume Judah. Ultimately it was nothing but smoke.

Isa 7:5 Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying,

Isa 7:6 "Let us go up against Judah and trouble it, and let us make a gap in its wall for ourselves, and set a king over them, the son of Tabel" -

Isa 7:7 thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand, Nor shall it come to pass.

Isa 7:8 For the head of Syria *is* Damascus, And the head of Damascus *is* Rezin. Within sixty-five years Ephraim will be broken, *So that it will not be* a people.

Isa 7:9 The head of Ephraim *is* Samaria, And the head of Samaria *is* Remaliah's son..."

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Tiglath-Pileser III was king of Assyria:

- He conquered Damascus. Their population was deported and Rezin executed.
- He conquered Israel and deported the ten tribes to Assyria.

Isa 7:9 ... "If you will not believe, Surely you shall not be established." ' ' "

The one thing Ahaz was asked to do was "believe." "Established" is translated a bunch of different ways in different versions of the Bible. The sense of it is that Ahaz and Judah would live in constant fear, instead of standing on the firm foundation of faith.

Ahaz would reject God's help. Instead, he made an alliance with Tiglath-Pileser III. Assyria's help seemed more tangible to them than God's help.

Help from the world, from unbelievers, can seem more tangible than prayer, Bible study, fellowship, etc. It seems even more tangible when it is worldly counsel coming from believers.

If an unbeliever is in a crisis, needing help, the solution is Jesus. The only real counsel we can give an unbeliever, then, is to evangelize them.

If you are a believer, you need to be disciplined. God the Holy Spirit lives in you, enabling you to obey God's Word.

I've always liked what Larry Norman said. "Don't ask me for the answers, I've only got one. A man leaves his darkness when he follows the Son."

One of the worst things about receiving and following ungodly counsel is that it sometimes 'works.' That is, it *seems* to work, short term.

It's easy to mistake God's grace for His favor. God can be gracious and allow you to prosper despite your being allied with the world rather than in an alliance with Him.

**G**od offered help, but Ahaz would rather make a deal with the devil, as it were. He reminds me of Khan, in the original *Star Trek*. Captain Kirk and his crew defeat Khan and offer the superhumans the ultimatum of facing justice on Earth or accepting a new exile on an abandoned planet. Khan responds, "Have you ever read Milton, Captain?" Kirk replies, "Yes, I understand." Khan had thus chosen exile. Kirk later explains Khan was alluding to Satan's famous statement from *Paradise Lost*, "Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven."

It's not, by the way. When you need help, go to the Helper.

## **#2 - The World Is Out To Harm You (v10-25)**

Our BFF said, *"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you"* (John 15:18). Any methodology, ideology, philosophy, psychology, theology, or any other such 'ology,' that is not biblical, with Christian ethics, is an alliance with folks who hate Jesus and will do you harm.

By "harm" I don't necessarily mean they will physically hurt you. That is an eventuality. Leading up to it, you are harmed because they undermine the character of your God and Savior, Jesus Christ. If He is omniscient and omnipotent and omnipresent, why do we need an ungodly principle or practice from the world? Jeremy Taylor wrote, "It is impossible for that man to despair who remembers that his Helper is omnipotent."

Isa 7:10 Moreover the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying,

Isa 7:11 "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above."

Isa 7:12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!"

Ahaz wasn't seeking a sign; he was offered one. Not only that, *he could choose the sign*. He could his imagination run wild. We would emphasize grace on God's part.

His refusal is universally understood by commentators as false humility, pride, hypocrisy, posturing, etc., etc.

### **God gave Ahaz a sign anyway.**

God's interactions with Ahaz are like a grace bomb. You'd think He was talking to a good king. The more Ahaz sinned, the more grace abounded.

Isa 7:13 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?"

It was one thing to say "No" to Isaiah. It was quite another thing to say "No" to God.

God has graciously given "signs" to the human race:

- Creation is a sign, revealing the existence and declaring the glory of God. Don Stewart writes, "The Bible testifies that Creation gives clear testimony to God's existence. Everyone, everywhere, has this testimony."
- Fulfilled Bible prophecy is an irrefutable sign. God's fulfilled prophecies are detailed and 100% accurate.

Is God wearied by people refusing Him? In the sense He is longsuffering with us, desiring we be saved. One day His longsuffering will end.

Unbelievers say "No" to God, and everything He has revealed, because they prefer their sin and self-sufficiency. This attitude is celebrated. Think of all the literature and films that hinge on the indomitable, unconquerable, human spirit.

Charles Spurgeon said of this next passage, *"It is said to be one of the most difficult in all the Word of God. It may be so; I certainly did not think it was until I saw what the commentators had to say about it, and I rose up from reading them perfectly confused."*

It is Isaiah's famous Christmas prophecy of the virgin birth of Jesus. Two of the difficulties are these:

1. The far-off virgin birth is somehow a contemporary "sign" to Ahaz.
2. Isaiah definitely refers to a child born and living during the rule of Ahaz, in addition to the future Messiah.

Isa 7:14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Isa 7:15 Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

Isa 7:16 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.

We know that this verse is about Jesus because Matthew cites it in his Gospel to describe Jesus' virgin birth. "So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD, AND BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which is translated, "God with us" (1:22-23).

"The virgin birth of Jesus is more accurately the **virginal conception** of Jesus. It teaches that Jesus Christ was born apart from the normal process of procreation, but

was supernaturally conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary by the power of God the Holy Spirit, born of her, without sin.”

Who is the other kid Isaiah describes, who eats “curds and honey,” and is a timestamp as to when Syria and Israel would be defeated?

Any answer starts with the use of the Hebrew word, *almah*. It was used of virgins, and of married young woman who were not virgins.

That’s because young, unmarried Jewish women were assumed to be virgins. A daughter could be a virgin, *almah*, get married and have normal relations with her husband, and still be *almah*.

There was no miraculous virgin birth in Judah. Isaiah described a young woman, probably in the royal household, who married, conceived a son in the normal manner, and unknowingly named him *Immanuel*. Before he would reach the age of discernment, Syria and Israel would be overthrown.

Immanuel wasn’t a common Jewish name. It wasn’t a name at all, but a title, “God with us.”

If this 7<sup>th</sup> century birth was not a “virgin” birth, how do we know Mary really was a virgin and not just a young woman who had committed sexual sin? Because, in the Gospel of Matthew, we also read,

Mat 1:20 But while [Joseph, the husband of Mary] 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.**

Mat 1:21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

In Luke’s Gospel, Mary stated she had not been with a man. The angel explained to Mary, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God*” (1:35).

Immanuel - God with us. It has always been God’s desire we enjoy His fellowship, and not that of the world.



Back to the future... In the remaining verses, Isaiah spells out the harm which will ensue if Ahaz doesn't quit looking beyond the LORD for help.

Isa 7:17 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."

A costly civil war between Israel and Judah lasted for several decades. The war was characterized by frequent battles, alliances with neighboring kingdoms, and betrayals within the two kingdoms.

The war ended with the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 722BC, leaving only the southern kingdom of Judah to continue as an independent Jewish nation.

Isa 7:18 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.

Isa 7:19 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.

Egypt was the "fly," and Assyria the "bee." David Guzik points out, "God would pinch Judah between these mighty nations to the north and south."

Isa 7:20 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.

The mafia identified hit men by saying they "painted houses." Assyria was God's "hired razor." They were sent to "shave," meaning humiliate. It was a great insult, a disgrace, for Jewish men to have their heads and beards shaved off. Legs, too, it seems.

Isa 7:21 It shall be in that day *That* a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep;

Isa 7:22 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.

Isa 7:23 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.

Isa 7:24 With arrows and bows men will come there, Because all the land will become briers and thorns.

Isa 7:25 And to any hill which could be dug with the hoe, You will not go there for fear of briars and thorns; But it will become a range for oxen And a place for sheep to roam."

The abundance of milk was not good. With many animals dying, a farmer's young cow and two goats would have no young to nurse, and so the milk (and curds from it) would be plentiful. Honey would also be abundant, but only because wild flowers would grow in the desolate fields, and bee swarms would be more plentiful. The farmers would have no crops because of the ruined farmland. The vineyards would be ruined along with the cultivated land, and only briars and thorns would grow. The land would be good only for grazing by cattle and sheep.

The devil is the ruler of this world; he is its god. The world is a corrupt system designed to keep unbelievers lost for eternity, and to persecute believers. There is no alliance with the world that can be made that does not eventually cause you harm.

One of the most sinister and satanic alliances is religion. If it ain't biblical Christianity, it is man-made. They all promise salvation can be earned by good works. It can't. They are all the broad highway to Hell.

**A**.W. Tozer wrote, *"An infinite God can give all of Himself to each of His children. He does not distribute Himself that each may have a part, but to each one He gives all of Himself as fully as if there were no others."*

Christian you are "filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 5:19). You have God dwelling in you, that you may obey, and thereby enjoy, Him.

Check your walk with Jesus for alliances with the world. Rely only upon Him.

Unbeliever: What or who are you relying upon to get into Heaven? Jesus was God in human flesh. Because He was born of a virgin, He did not inherit a sin nature. He could, therefore, take your place, dying in your stead for your sins. On the Cross, He took your sins upon Himself, and offers you His righteousness. It cannot be earned, only given. The provision of the forgiveness of sins is universal, but you must believe Him in order to be saved.

Jesus died; three days later, He rose from the dead. He ascended into Heaven. Any moment He will be back.