

THROUGH THE BIBLE

ISAIAH 7-9

Tonight's chapters, Isaiah 7-9, have as a backdrop the most underrated story in the OT... Christians know the stories of *David and Goliath*, *Jonah and the whale*, *Daniel in the lion's den*, *Moses at the burning bush*...

But few have heard of **Isaiah and the Angel**.

Yet here's a story so important to God's interests, He chose to record it three times in Scripture - [2 Kings 19](#), [2 Chronicles 32](#), and [Isaiah 37](#). The event is also referred to in the other prophets and in the psalms.

Here's the story... After successful sieges against the Syrian capitol of Damascus, and the Israeli capitol of Samaria - in 701 BC the Assyrian army set its sights on the Judean capitol of Jerusalem and laid siege.

At least 185,000 troops camped outside Jerusalem's walls poised to strike. For comparison, a 200,000 troop army is about the population of Forsyth County, GA.

The Assyrian king hoped the mere threat of such a vast army would intimidate the Jews into surrender. His hope was to conquer Jerusalem without firing a shot.

But that's not what happened.

Isaiah the prophet and *Hezekiah the king* dropped to their knees, and prayed for a miracle. The people of Jerusalem went to bed on the brink annihilation, but the next morning they awoke to a pleasant surprise.

That night an angel of the Lord fought for Judah. A single battle-hardened angel - a one-angel wrecking crew - slaughtered 185,000 seasoned soldiers.

2 Kings 19:35 provides a play-by-play, "On a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians 185,000; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses - all dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home (he tucked tail), and remained at Nineveh." It was a devastating defeat.

George Byron immortalized the Angel's victory in a poem... "The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold, and his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold.

And the sheen of their spears were like stars on the sea, when the blue waves roll nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when summer is green, that host with their banners at sunset were seen.

Like the leaves of the forest when autumn has blown, that host on tomorrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread His wings on the blast, and breathed in the face of the foe as he passed.

And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill, and their hearts, once heaved, forever grew still!"

And there lay the soldiers distorted and pale, with the dew on their brow, and the rust on their mail.

And their tents were all silent, their banners alone, the lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the Assyrian widows are loud in their wail, and the idols are broke in the temple of Baal.

And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword, has melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!”

It was a mighty triumph by the one true God!

But that’s just the beginning of the story. Isaiah 7-10 fills in some details and provides us some background.

It sets the stage. Verse 1, “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.” Isaiah takes us back in time - 30 years prior to the invasion.

Verse 1 recalls a couple of earlier bullies.

Hezekiah’s granddad, Ahaz, was frightened when the *king of Syria* and *king of Israel* came against him.

Understand, Syria and Assyria were two different people groups. Assyria lived on the Euphrates River in the heart of Mesopotamia. Nineveh was its capitol. Syria lived north of Israel, with its capitol in Damascus.

At the time, Ahaz was afraid of his nearer neighbors, Israel and Syria. In fact, he was courting the more distant Assyria - hoping to secure their protection.

“And it was told to the house of David (or the kings of Judah), 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.” Ever heard the expression, “shaking like a leaf?” Here is where it originates. It described Ahaz.

Ephraim was the tribe just north of Jerusalem. This meant an invading army was camped in Jerusalem’s northern suburbs. And it scared King Ahaz to death.

Verse 3, “Then the LORD said to Isaiah, “Go out now to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-Jashub your son...”

Isaiah had two sons - and there’s a price to be paid if you’re the son of a prophet - *you might get a weird name...* Isaiah named both his sons prophetically.

The phrase, “*Shear-Jashub*” means “a remnant shall return.” This promise of a Jewish remnant was God’s assurance Judah would never be utterly destroyed.

And God tells this Father-Son prophetic team where to meet King Ahaz, “At the end of the aqueduct from the upper pool, on the highway to the Fuller’s Field...”

If you’ve been to Jerusalem “*the upper pool*” was probably the Pools of Bethesda, north of the Temple Mount. The location of the Fuller’s Field is uncertain so we’re not sure which way the highway ran.

FYI, “*a fuller*” was a professional launderer. He cleansed and thickened cloth - he made it “*fuller.*” He took soap and elbow grease and pounded out the stains. It also reconditioned the fibers. The laundry process necessitated running water so the Fuller’s Field was always located near a stream or a spring.

King Ahaz is expecting a prolonged siege of the city, so he goes out to inspect the aqueduct - the city’s water supply. It was either east or north of the city.

And Isaiah goes to intercept him on his way. In verse 4 God tells Isaiah what to say to the king “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 Syrian king was “*Rezin*.” King of Israel was the son of Remaliah - a man named “*Pekah*.”

God calls them “*two stubs of smoking firebrands*” or literally a couple of cigarette butts... Here’s His point, these kings and their armies will blow a lot of smoke, but won’t flame. *Don’t be afraid or intimidated by them.*

Remember at this time, Ahaz is seeking the protection of the far-away Assyrians. Fear is forcing him into an ungodly alliance. He doesn’t trust God.

In fact, he’ll go so far as to buy the security of the Assyrians with gold from the Temple. Ahaz will even bow to the idols of Assyria. This grieves God. Ahaz’s compromise is unnecessary. God promises to deliver.

Is our fear forcing us to create ungodly alliances?

“Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have plotted evil against you, saying, "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." "*Tabel*" was a code name for Remaliah.

“Thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand, nor shall it come to pass.” God will thwart the Syrians.

For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. Within 65 years Ephraim will be broken, so that it will not be a people. The head of Ephraim is

Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.” Ahaz shouldn’t worry about Syria and Damascus - or Ephraim (a nickname for Israel).

In 65 years Syrian and Israel will be no more.

At the time it was 733 BC. Eleven years later Israel’s capitol fell to Assyria in 722 BC. In the years following the Assyrians resettled Ephraim with foreigners from other conquered lands. By 668 BC, 65 years later, the northern kingdom of Israel had lost its Hebrew identity.

One truth you learn by studying the Bible is that nothing God does is random. Here, the location of Isaiah’s prophecy was no accident. Remember, Ahaz had invited the Assyrians to protect him against Syria.

Yet in the years to come, Assyrian will pose a greater threat than either Syria or Israel. In just three decades, in the reign of Ahaz’ son, Hezekiah, 185,000 Assyrian troops will surround Jerusalem - and their King, a man named Sennacherib, will send out an ambassador to rail insults and threats, and pose terms of surrender.

And guess where he speaks to Jerusalem?

2 Kings 18:17 tell us **“On the highway to the fuller’s field.”** Sennacherib’s envoy will do his trash talking at the exact same spot Isaiah promised God’s protection.

It was a double reminder...

If King Ahaz had trusted God instead of the pursuing the Assyrians, his son, Hezekiah, might not have faced their murderous army outside the walls of Jerusalem.

Yet now that it’s occurred, God’s promises still stand!

In the exact spot where the enemy will hurl its threats, God has already promised His deliverance.

Verse 10, “Moreover the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, “Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above.”

Here is an incredible command... *ask for a sign!*

God is going to assure Ahaz of His deliverance with a sign of the king’s choosing. He can ask for the most outlandish sign imaginable... *and God will do it!*

If it were you, what would you have asked?

“But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!” We’ll learn from Ahaz’ future actions that this was a false humility. He didn’t really want to trust God.

Ahaz had already made up his mind. He had more confidence in his political maneuvers, than in God. He was planning to strike an alliance with the Assyrians.

So, since Ahaz refuses to name a sign, God does it for him. “Then he (Isaiah) said, “Hear now, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign...” And notice Isaiah takes this matter of a sign beyond the current, local situation.

The immediate politics provoked the prophecy, but it’s as if God knew it’d be wasted on Ahaz, so He broadens its implications to the whole house of David.

The sign Isaiah reveals will speak not only to King Ahaz, but it’ll be a sign to all the kings of the Davidic dynasty, and to all generations of the tribe of Judah.

And what God chooses as a sign is more bizarre than anything Ahaz could've dreamed up on his own.

Isaiah says in verse 14, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel...” or “God with us!” What a sign indeed!

If you've studied the NT you'll recall that after the angel appears to Joseph to tell him his betrothed wife, Mary, has conceived a son through the Holy Spirit, Matthew says this occurred to fulfill that which was spoken by the prophet - then he quotes [Isaiah 7:14](#).

Jesus was born of a virgin, just as Isaiah predicted!

Two other OT prophecies foretell the virgin birth: Genesis 3:15 and Jeremiah 31:22. But none of them do it as clearly and forcefully as the sign given to Ahaz.

Be aware that in Isaiah 7:14 the Hebrew word translated “*virgin*” is “*almah*.” There are skeptics who'll say “*almah*” doesn't necessarily mean “*virgin*.” It can mean “*a young girl of marriageable age*” - that's true.

But it often will mean “*virgin*.” In fact, “*almah*” appears seven times in the OT. Each time the context refers to a girl who has never had sexual relations.

All doubt about this word was removed in 270 BC when the OT was translated into Greek - a translation known as the Septuagint renders the word “*almah*” as the Greek word “*parthenos*” - which is an unequivocal reference to a virgin. This is the word Matthew uses.

There's no doubt Matthew considered Mary a virgin.

And this is important. The virgin birth of Jesus is not a peripheral doctrine. It's crucial to Christianity.

The genetics of salvation require a virgin birth.

Sin is passed down from Adam - through the father's bloodline. If a human father had sired Jesus He would've been born in sin, and His death could never be substitutionary. For Jesus to die for you and me it was necessary for Him to be born sinless. The virgin birth enabled Jesus to be as human as his mother Mary, yet as sinless and divine as God in heaven.

Here's the point of Isaiah's prophecy - he introduces "*Immanuel*." The sign to Ahaz was "*Immanuel*."

He'll be born of a virgin, but that's 700 years future. Isaiah 7:14 lists a detail that identifies His birth, but Jesus was pre-existent. He was alive in Isaiah's day.

In fact, more relevant to King Ahaz than *His virgin birth* - was *His presence* and *His mission*. Jesus didn't commence being Immanuel when He was born of a virgin. He was Immanuel from the beginning. And here Isaiah introduces Immanuel to the nation Judah.

He'll be born of a virgin 700 years in the future, but He's about to play a huge role in Judah's current crisis!

Isaiah talks about "*Immanuel*" in verse 15, "*Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse evil and choose the good. 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.*"

Curds and honey were baby food. Thus Isaiah is saying before this miraculous, virgin-born child reaches adulthood Syria and Israel will no longer be a serious threat. *It was 730 years before the child of the prophecy was even born. Yet if Jesus had been born that very day the timeframe would've still been valid.*

A Jewish boy celebrates his [bar-mitzvah](#), or his passage from childhood into adulthood, at age 12. In a little less than a dozen years the Assyrians had wiped out both Syria and Israel. Both enemies were toppled.

Assyria will conquer Syria and Israel, but they'll keep coming South... **"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."** Here he references the Civil War that split the nation after King Solomon.

Times will be worse than they've been in two centuries... **"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. 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."** The enemy armies will swarm into the land like flies and like bees.

"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 Assyrians often scalped their conquered foes. They'll serve as God's razor.

Verse 21 **"It shall be in that day that a man will keep alive a young cow and two sheep; 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."** There'll be no steak in

Judah. The people will be forced to survive, so they'll keep their few head of cattle alive as an ongoing source of milk and cheese.

“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. With arrows and bows men will come there, because all the land will become briers and thorns. And to any hill which could be dug with the hoe, you will not go there for fear of briers and thorns; but it will become a range for oxen and a place for sheep to roam.” Once populated areas will be a wilderness. Animals graze where people lived.

Here're the conditions prompted by the invasion.

Chapter 8 begins, “Moreover the LORD said to me, “Take a large scroll, and write on it with a man's pen concerning Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.” Here's the name of Isaiah's second son, “*Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.*”

I think I'd rather be “*the boy named Sue... even Sandy.*” Imagine the first day of school with the name, “*Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz.*” This too was prophetic.

It meant, “*speed to the plunder, swift to the spoils.*”

The name of Isaiah's first son spoke of *God's deliverance*. His second son's name spoke of *God's destruction*. Jerusalem's enemies will be plundered.

Verse 2 “And I will take for Myself faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.” Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, “Call his name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz; for before the child shall have knowledge to cry 'My father' and 'My mother,' the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be taken away before the king of Assyria.”

God will judge Judah's enemies by the hand of the Assyrians before Isaiah's son can say, "Dad" or "Mom."

"The LORD also spoke to me again, saying: "Inasmuch as these people refused the waters of Shiloah that flow softly, and rejoice in Rezin and in Remaliah's son..." God was upset with the northern ten tribes of Israel for turning their back on Jerusalem.

The "*waters of Shiloah*" was the **pool of Siloam**. It was Jerusalem's water supply. Yet Israel had turned their back on the waters of God - the city of Jerusalem.

Instead, they set up a rival kingdom in Samaria.

"Now therefore, behold, the Lord brings up over them the waters of the River, strong and mighty - the king of Assyria and all his glory; he will go up over all his channels and go over all his banks." The waters of Jerusalem were gentle and flowed softly, whereas the armies of Assyria will overwhelm Israel like a flood.

Notice verse 8, "He (meaning the king of Assyria) will pass through Judah, he will overflow and pass over, he will reach up to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings will fill the breadth of Your land, O Immanuel."

Here is where the plot thickens... Remember Isaiah 7:14. *Who is "Immanuel"?* He won't be born for 700 years, but Jesus, the Son of God, exists from eternity past to eternity future. Jesus is this "*Immanuel*." He is "God with us" - and the land of Israel belongs to Him.

Of course, this is the truth that will one day dawn on both Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Hamas. Today, they are fighting over possession of the land. But when Immanuel returns He'll take what belongs to Him.

Everyone will agree, it's "*Your land, O Immanuel*."

And this was why the foreign invaders of Isaiah's day should beware. Assyrian troops had poured into Judah like a flood, but their army was about to meet its match.

"Be shattered, O you peoples, and be broken in pieces! Give ear, all you from far countries. Gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, but be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, but it will come to nothing; speak the word, but it will not stand, for God is with us." Who would stop the invasion and break the invaders? "God is with us" - "Immanuel."

What was the sign God gave to Ahaz - the guarantee of deliverance? It was "God with us" or "Immanuel."

Here's why "*Isaiah and the Angel*" is one of the most provocative stories in the Bible. Jesus was the Angel who killed 185,000 Assyrians. It was *Immanuel on the warpath*. The first blood Jesus spilt was not His own.

The Hebrew term "*angel*" simply means "*messenger*" whether human or angelic. There are other OT examples where the Angel of the Lord was the pre-incarnate Jesus. I believe that's what happened here.

Here's the part of the Christmas story that seldom gets told. Mary's baby was not a newcomer. He had been here before. **The babe had been to battle.**

The Christmas Child was **Immanuel** - the warrior of Isaiah's day that proved the Hebrew God true and dispensed with the evil Assyrians. The babe Mary *laid in the manger hay* had already *made hay* in battle.

Seven centuries earlier the Babe of Bethlehem came brandishing a sword. *With fire in His eyes and justice in His heart* - Jesus flashed His steel, and by the time He returned it to its scabbard it dripped with rebel blood...

Before Mary's baby cried, He'd yelled a battle cry...

Imagine Joseph when he heard the Angel say, *"Immanuel."* He knew Isaiah. What did he think when he learned that Mary's baby was the Ancient Warrior?

It made the humility of God - the fact, that God was willing to become a man - all the more amazing!

Verse 11 *"For the LORD spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying: "Do not say, 'A conspiracy, 'Concerning all that this people call a conspiracy, nor be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled. The LORD of hosts, Him you shall hallow; let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread."*

At the time Ahaz was afraid of two nations conspiring against him - Israel and Syria. God says don't be afraid of a *"conspiracy."* **One plus God still equals a majority.**

Oliver Cromwell was a courageous man. One day he was asked how he could be so brave. He responded, *"I have learned that when you fear God, you have nothing else to fear."* God will be Jerusalem's defense!

And if you trust Him, He'll be your defense as well!

"He will be as a sanctuary, but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel..."

1 Peter 2 takes this verse and applies it to Immanuel.

Embrace Jesus as your cornerstone, and He'll make you a Temple of praise. Reject Him and you'll stumble.

You'll stumble over Him, and be broken by Him.

This is what happened to the Jews. They stumbled over Jesus. He didn't meet up to their expectations.

They wanted Him to be a political ruler. Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom. They were offended by His claims and His intentions. Better to embrace Jesus as your Lord, than to stumble over your own prejudice.

Jesus became "as a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken, be snared and taken." In Matthew 21:44 Jesus referred to Himself as a stone. "Whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder."

It's wonderful to come broken and humble before the Lord. But the haughty and self-reliant will be crushed.

Verse 16, "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait on the LORD, Who hides His face from the house of Jacob; and I will hope in Him. Here am I and the children whom the LORD has given me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, Who dwells in Mount Zion."

Isaiah was a righteous man in a sea of idolaters. His life, and sons were a sign against the faithless.

In contrast, Ahaz had sold his soul to Assyria. He bowed to idols. “And when they say to you, “Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,” should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?”

Imagine, in Jerusalem’s darkest hour some of her brightest minds turned to the occult, rather than God.

It grieved Isaiah. *Why would you trust a wizard, or try to speak to the dead, when you can go to a living God?*

Verse 20 “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” This was Isaiah’s strategy when he faced tough times and impossible circumstances.

He turned to the law, the testimony, the Word of God.

And if a counselor steers you in any other direction than God’s Word then “*there is no light in them.*”

They’re not speaking for God.

“They will pass through it hard pressed and hungry; and it shall happen, when they are hungry, that they will be enraged and curse their king and their God, and look upward. Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness.” Those who refuse to trust in God, turn on everyone else. They “*curse their king.*”

It’s easier to blame others than rely on God.

Chapter 9 “Nevertheless the gloom will not be upon her who is distressed, as when at first He lightly esteemed the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali...” Zebulun and Naphtali were always the lesser of the tribes, especially in the days of Isaiah...

These were the tribes that felt “*the gloom*” from Chapter 8 - the full brunt of the Assyrian invasion.

“And afterward more heavily oppressed her, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, in Galilee of the Gentiles.” Notice, Isaiah speaks of “*the way of the sea*” or the *Via Maris*. This was a trade route than ran along the Mediterranean up the coast through the Galilee.

This was the path marched by the Assyrian army.

Notice too Isaiah also calls these northern tribes the “*Galilee of the Gentiles.*” After the Assyrian invasion a larger Gentile population settled by the Sea of Galilee. By the first century, Galilee was home of Greek culture.

“*Beyond the Jordan*” or “*east of the Jordan*” was also an area heavily populated with Gentiles. It too was a northern area - east of the Jordan River. Ten Roman cities, “*The Decapolis,*” eventually dotted this area.

All this explains Nathaniel’s reaction to Phillip when he was invited to come and meet Jesus of Nazareth.

Nathaniel scoffed, “*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*” Nazareth was at the heart of the Galilee.

All the invading armies entered Israel from the north. So before they reached Ephraim and Judah, Zebulun and Naphtali were the first tribes their feet trampled.

Yet Isaiah says these two tribes will be compensated for their trouble. Verse 2, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.” Galilee, which was Jerusalem’s doormat will emerge from the “*gloom*,” and be given a special blessing. They will be privileged to see “*a great light*.”

And what was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s promise?

Jesus made Galilee the base for His ministry. He did most of His miracles on the sea, along the shore, in the Galilean villages of Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin.

What we call “*the Gospel Triangle*” saw more miracles per square mile than any other place on Earth. These cities were all part of the tribe of Naphtali.

Jesus was the great light that shined on the Galilee.

Verse 3 “You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; they rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.” The “*You*” here is “*Immanuel*.” Jesus replaced the “*gloom*” of Israel’s invaders with an increased joy.

“For You have broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.” Immanuel broke Assyria’s chokehold on the city of Jerusalem and brought a harvest of joy!

“For every warrior’s sandal from the noisy battle, and garments rolled in blood, will be used for burning and fuel of fire...” Thus, the spoils of Immanuel’s victory!

And again we find Immanuel in Isaiah. The virgin born babe in chapter 7 - the conqueror of chapter 8 - now in chapter 9 we have the fullest description yet...

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given”

Jesus was fully human - a newborn child. But He was also fully divine, God's only Son, a gift to us.

Imagine, Almighty God laying aside His power, and coming to Earth a frail, helpless child - trusting Himself to the care of a teenage mom. It's been said, **“The incarnation adds courage to the virtues of the Creator.”**

When the Holy God join the ranks of humanity He entered through lowest door. He came to *understand our predicament and disarm us with His compassion.*

“And the government will be upon His shoulder.” Before Jesus *slept in an earthly manger He sat on a heavenly throne.* The Lord is use to being in charge.

Jesus is King of heaven - thus, governing Earth is not too much for Him to shoulder. He's not afraid of hard and stressful choices. He's qualified for the job.

There are those who teach that the Church will usher in God's Kingdom. They envision the Church as a body with political muscle. The goal of the Church is to take over society and the governments that oversee them.

But this is not what Isaiah tells us. The government will rest on Jesus' shoulders - not ours. Our job is to prepare the way for Christ's return by our faithfulness.

Verse 6 continues, **“And His name will be called Wonderful** (Jesus is the spice of life), **Counselor** (Got a problem, need wisdom, go to Jesus.), **Mighty God** (Miracles are His forte'), **Everlasting Father** (He and the Father are one), **Prince of Peace”** (He'll bring peace *to the world*, and He brings peace *to our hearts.*)

And, “Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever.”

Jesus will sit on the throne of David - that makes it a Jewish throne. He brings peace and justice. And as an Eternal King He establishes an everlasting kingdom.

There are those who claim God is through with Israel. The promises He made to the Jews have been inherited by the Church. But not so!... Jesus is a Jewish King and His throne will be a Jewish throne.

As hard as certain Gentiles might fight against such a notion, Isaiah closes verse 7 with a note of triumph, “The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

“The LORD sent a word against Jacob, and it has fallen on Israel. All the people will know - Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria - who say in pride and arrogance of heart: “The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will replace them with cedars.”

When Assyria first attacked the northern kingdom, they replaced the Hebrew king, Pekah, with a puppet king, Hoshea. But Israel was too stubborn to admit defeat. They tried to rebuild and refortify their city.

They even solicited the help of the Egyptians.

“Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and spur his enemies on, the Syrians before and the Philistines behind...” God had raised up Assyrian and was against the northern tribes.

The Assyrians would conquer Syria before they laid siege to Israel and Samaria. Afterwards they turned west along the coast and conquered the Philistines.

“And they shall devour Israel with an open mouth.

For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still. For the people do not turn to Him who strikes them, nor do they seek the LORD of hosts.” All that God brought on His people was an attempt to get their attention - motivate them to repent.

Their only option was to repent, yet they resisted.

Once an airplane pilot radioed the tower, “Pilot to tower, I’m 300 miles from land, 600 feet high, and running out of fuel, please instruct... over.”

The tower radioed back, “*Tower to pilot, repeat after me, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name...”*”

When you’re running out of options, run to God.

“Therefore the LORD will cut off head and tail from Israel, palm branch and bulrush in one day. The elder and honorable, he is the head; the prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail.” Both the honorable and the heretic will die at the hands of the invading Assyrians.

As a side note, realize God considers the false prophet - a teacher who lies - the worse of the worst.

“For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and those who are led by them are destroyed.” It’s said, “Never follow a leader until you know who the leader is following.” In Israel it was the blind leading the blind.

“Therefore the LORD will have no joy in their young men, nor have mercy on their fatherless and widows; for everyone is a hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.”

Israel’s judgment continues... “For wickedness burns as the fire; it shall devour the briars and thorns, and kindle in the thickets of the forest; they shall mount up like rising smoke. Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts the land is burned up, and the people shall be as fuel for the fire; no man shall spare his brother.

And he shall snatch on the right hand and be hungry; he shall devour on the left hand and not be satisfied; every man shall eat the flesh of his own arm.”

Here Isaiah is describing the effects of **siege warfare**. Rather than risk the lives of their soldiers, often an invading army would lay siege to the city, cut off the supply lines, and starve out its opponent.

This is what Assyria did to Samaria. They laid siege for three years. *Nobody in, nobody out*. They stopped all the delivery trucks. They waited on a city to starve.

And inside the city walls people got desperate. Folks were so hungry they attempted to eat their own flesh.

They resorted to cannibalism. Imagine being so hungry you gnaw on your own limbs. Bite off a finger.

It gives a new definition to the term, “finger food.”

Which reminds me of a few cannibal jokes.

I’ve got four... First, “Did you hear about the cannibal who ate something that disagreed with him?” *His mother-in-law!* Second, “What did the cannibal get when he was late for dinner?” *A cold shoulder.*

Third, “Did you hear about the cannibal who ordered the pizza with everybody on it?” And fourth, “Why was the cannibal expelled from school?” *Buttering up his teacher...* Well, the cannibalism that occurred during the Assyrian siege of Samaria was no laughing matter.

Chapter 9 ends, “Manasseh shall devour Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh; together they shall be against Judah.” The tribes of Israel will turn on each other.

Yet, “For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.” Even after all Israel endures she’s still unrepentant. And God’s judgments continue.