

Sent: Wednesday, October 16, 2022 5:00 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Isaiah 7

"Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call His name Immanuel!" (Isaiah 7:14)

Last week (in Isaiah 6), after having written five chapters of prophecies concerning Judah and Jerusalem--ending with the solemn parable of a desolated vineyard (picturing the fallen "house of Israel") and a series of "woes" to a people who have "despised the word of the Holy One of Israel--Isaiah shares the dramatic events of his conversion and calling to be God's prophet in one of the most critical times in the history of God's people! (And the world at large!)

Isaiah shares how he "saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the hem of His robe filling the temple," and the "foundations of the thresholds trembling...and the temple filling with smoke," and one Seraphim calling out to another, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is filled with His glory"! And how he saw himself as "lost... and a man of unclean lips, living among people of unclean lips"! And how one of the Seraphim "flew to him with a burning coal in his hand, taken from the altar with tongs, and touched his lips" and declared that his "iniquity was taken away and his sin forgiven"!

Then, he tells how he responded when he "heard the voice of the Lord" seeking a man He could "send" to His people--and he said, "Here am I, send me!" And the Lord commissioned him to "go and tell this people... who will listen but not perceive...whose hearts would be insensitive, ears dull, eyes dim..." and who will not be receptive to what he would have to say, though given by God! But still, to go! How long would he have to do this, he asked? "Until the land is utterly desolate!" the Lord said!

And that kind of reception, and result, is basically what Isaiah experienced and recorded in Isaiah 7, our lesson last night, about "the days of Ahaz"!

Ahaz, though king of Judah (and a tenth-generation descendant of David, residing in Solomon's temple in Jerusalem) turned out to be a very wicked king! II Kings 16:3-4 says that he "did not do what was right in the sight of the Lord his God as his father David had done but walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and even made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord driven out from before the sons of Israel!"

When faced with a threat from Rezin, king of Aram (Syria) and Pekah, the king of Israel (the northern kingdom), verse 2 says "his heart and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind"! And even when the Lord sent Isaiah to tell him to "believe," and not to fear them, and likened them to "two stubs of smoldering firebrands," who would "not stand," he refused to believe and, instead (II Kings 16 tells us) made a secret alliance with Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, saying to him that he was "his servant and son" (son?) and asking him to "come and deliver him from the hands of Aram and Pekah"! And (would you believe) even "took silver and gold from the house of the Lord" to send to him!

And yet, Isaiah 7:10 says that God (through Isaiah) spoke to him again and told him to "ask for sign (for himself!) from the Lord his God" (which was wide-open and would answer all his concerns), but he refused (can you believe?) --apparently because of his unbelief and commitment to, and trust in, Tiglath! (As Kirk noted last night, this "sealed his fate" and was the "pivot point in Judah's future"!)

II Chronicles 28 tells how the Lord "humbled Judah because of Ahaz and that (as might have been expected) Tiglath "came against Ahaz instead of strengthening him"! And that "in the time of distress Ahaz became yet more unfaithful to the Lord," even sacrificing to the gods of Damascus"--all of which "became the downfall of him and all of Israel"!

Isaiah prophesied in verses 17-25 that the Lord would "bring on you (Ahaz), on your people, and on your father's house ("house of David") such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah, the king of Assyria" (and not Aram or Pekah, as Ahaz had feared)! And, in that day, "flies" from Egypt, and "bees" from Assyria (picturing armies!) that God would "whistle" (summon) to overrun the land! And "briars and thorns" where there used to be vines (reflecting back on the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah 5)! And a "razor" to shave the heads and remove the beards of the people of Judah (the final disgrace)!

Motyer summarizes it this way: "The way of faith, as urged by Isaiah to Ahaz, has been rejected! The king of Assyria has been adjudged a greater security than the Lord and his promises! What now follows has the inevitability of biblical logic: the alternatives to the way of salvation are always ways of destruction...When the people of God operate 'by what stands to reason' rather than what proceeds from faith, when they seek safety in the resources, politics, and powers of the world--the king of Assyria instead of 'the King, the Lord Almighty'--the things they trust in guarantee their calamity!"

He also said (insightfully!) that, "as Isaiah understood it, the real issue was not one of military muscle nor of political cleverness in creating defensive alliances but whether the Lord could be trusted to do what He promised"!

But there's one more thing that we need to go back to! Isaiah 7:14! Why would God, after Ahaz rejected asking for a sign--that God specifically told him to ask for, and which God would willingly would have given to him--take this occasion, of all times, to give the greatest sign in all the Bible? The sign of "the" virgin who be with child and bear a son and call His name Immanuel"! Note that this sign was not given to Ahaz but addressed and announced to the whole house of David, "Listen now, O house of David!"

Was there ever a greater time that Judah needed the promise of a Savior, and the hope of a future (!), than in the day of all this chaos and confusion--with the Assyrian empire on the rise, with the Babylonians to follow, and the Persians, and the Greek, and when, finally, the Romans who would be reigning and the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 would come to pass (all of which even Isaiah could never have seen)! (Galatians 4:4 says, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman ("the virgin"!), born under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons!"

Aren't you glad Isaiah was called to prophesy?

May God be with you all and may you continue to trust His promises!

Lowell