

Isaiah 7

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[0 : 0 0] Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu is short of friends. Just last week, some of you may have picked this up in the news, the UN voted to up the status of Palestine to a non-member observing state. Now, that seems a bit of a mouthful, but the crucial word there is state. Previously, they were regarded as an entity, but now a non-member observing state. Now, in that vote, and I'm not giving an opinion on that, well, I'm happy to give an opinion that a two-state solution is surely the only way forward, but putting aside that personal opinion, in this particular vote, only nine nations supported Israel in opposing the motion. Among them, such heavyweights as Nauru, Palau, and the Marshall Islands. Did you even know that these were countries? Well, perhaps your geography is better than mine. But I guess the fact that one of the nine nations that supported Israel in opposing the motion that was carried overwhelmingly was the United States, and I suppose that fact provides some comfort to the powers that be in Jerusalem. Powerful allies are ever to be courted, secured, secured, and kept on board in the complex world that is the Middle East.

That Jerusalem should be intent on securing powerful allies is not only a present reality. It has ever been so.

Some 2,700 years ago, King Ahaz reigned in Jerusalem, the southern kingdom of Judah. You remember, of course, that following the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided between the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, with Jerusalem as its capital. Well, Ahaz was king of the southern kingdom there in Jerusalem. And Ahaz was short of friends. He was threatened by immediate neighbors in the north and dangerously exposed. To the north, the northern kingdom of Israel and Syria, in the readings referred to as Aram, had forged an alliance and were intent on drawing Judah into this, what we might call, what we might call developing regional power block. And they would do so, or their intention was to draw Judah into this power block by fair means or foul.

The driving force behind this intention was Syria, the more powerful of these players, and they themselves. And the reason why they were intent on creating this regional power block, if we want to call it that, the reason this was such a concern for Syria is that they were very conscious of the threat that they were under from the Assyrians. Notice not very similar, but the Assyrians as distinct from the Syrians. The Assyrians under Tiglath-Pileser were the dominant world power.

At the time of the events that we were reading about in Kings and in Isaiah, they were occupied with expansion to the north and to the east, but soon they would be focusing their attention to the west.

[3 : 3 1] And of course, there Syria and Israel and indeed Judah would come under the gaze of the Assyrians. And so, Syria were seeking to create this block that would provide them some kind of defense against the threat from the Assyrians.

Now, at the time of the events described at the beginning of the seventh chapter of the prophet Isaiah, King Ahaz, king in Judah, is weighing up his options in the face of the continuing threat from the north. We read in chapter 7 how there had already been an endeavor to conquer Jerusalem.

We can read it again there in Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 1, when Ahaz, son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, was king of Judah, king Rezin of Aram and Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, marched up to fight against Jerusalem, but they could not overpower it.

They'd been able to take possession of other parts of Judah, as we read in Kings, but the city of Jerusalem they were unable to overcome. However, it becomes very clear that they were going to try again.

And King Ahaz has to decide what to do. You know, what do I do in the face of this threat from the north? We were able to withstand one attack, but Ahaz is very sure that they will not be able to withstand a further attack. Certainly, that's his calculation. So, what does he do? Well, really, he has two options. The first option that he has, which is by far the best option for a king in Jerusalem, a son of David, the best option that he had was surely to put his trust in the Lord.

[5 : 10] This was a realistic, practical option. He could trust in the Lord to protect Jerusalem. But as we've read in 2 Kings, Ahaz was not of a mind to put his trust in the Lord. We read there that he is described in very sobering terms. He did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God as his father David had done. Indeed, it goes on to speak of terrible things that Ahaz was guilty of. And so, given his reputation, given his character, given his disdain for the Lord, this option that was an option, a very real option, this option of trusting in the Lord did not seem to Ahaz to be a realistic one. It was, no doubt, in the mind of Ahaz, not a practical option. He was a king. He was a practical man. And trusting the Lord, well, that's fine for prophets and religious folk, but he needed something more concrete in his mind, from his perspective. But Ahaz had another option, and his second option was that he could secure the support of the Assyrians. They, after all, were the big player in town. And if he could secure the support of the Assyrians under Tiglath-Pileser, so he thought he would be protected from his enemies to the north. Now, this alliance, if we can call it an alliance, was certainly not an alliance of equals, but rather a groveling approach.

By Ahaz to the biggest bully in town, to secure his help at a price, at a very considerable price, and not only financial, to deal with the lesser bullies intent on capturing Jerusalem and deposing Ahaz. So, these are the two options that he has. And it is at this point, as Ahaz is pondering on his options, or perhaps having decided on securing an alliance with Assyria, but yet to act on that decision, it is at this point that God, through the prophet Isaiah, approaches Ahaz to give him a final opportunity to put his trust in the Lord. You know, the prospects weren't very promising, given Ahaz's track record, but God patiently and graciously is to give him another opportunity to do the right thing, to do the wise thing, to put his trust in the Lord. And so, we read there in chapter 7 that we've read of Isaiah, that Isaiah, accompanied by his son, is to meet Ahaz. There in verse 3 we read of this arrangement, the Lord said to Isaiah, go out, you and your son, Shear,

Yeshub, to meet Ahaz at the end of the aqueduct of the upper pool. Presumably, Ahaz was to be found there at the aqueduct as he was determining the security of the water supplies of Jerusalem in the face of the imminent attack from the north. So, he was about his business, seeking in as much as he could to secure the city. And that is the location where the prophet meets with the king, with a message from God. And the message that Ahaz is given is a message of real hope, a message of real hope grounded in two great truths concerning God that are encapsulated in the name of the God who addresses Ahaz. Notice there in verse 7, when these words of great hope are addressed to Ahaz, what do we read by way of introduction? Yet this is what the sovereign Lord says. And in these words, describing the one who speaks to Ahaz, through the prophet, we have the grounds for real hope. For this God is the sovereign Lord.

He is the one who has power over all the nations, power over Israel, power over Syria, power over Assyria. He is the sovereign, all-powerful God. And Ahaz should have taken note of this reality.

But not only is he sovereign, but he is the Lord. He is Yahweh. He is the covenant God committed to his people. He is the covenant God loyal to his people. He is the covenant God who loves Jerusalem, who loves Zion. So, he has all power to protect, and he has every disposition to protect, for he loves his people.

[10:00] This is the one who speaks to Ahaz. And that fact alone ought to have been sufficient for Ahaz to have taken on board this message of real hope that is addressed to him. And what is it that God says?

What is it that God says? Well, the message begins in verse 4. Say to him, that is God, says to the prophet, address Ahaz in this way, say to him, be careful, keep calm, and don't be afraid.

There's another way in which the Hebrew can be translated, which is intriguing and possibly a legitimate way of doing so, and that is to translate it in this way, do nothing, don't be afraid. What's the idea? With either translation, the idea is the same. The subtext is clear. What God is saying to Ahaz is don't go and make alliances with the Assyrians. Don't be busying yourself with finding ways of protecting Jerusalem independently of myself. You know, don't be afraid of these enemies, and don't be seeking unholy alliances. Do nothing in that sense. But he goes on to give him a further message as he is faced with this threat from the north. The other element of the message we could summarize in this way, and it is this, don't overestimate your enemies.

Don't be afraid. Do nothing. Don't be entering into unholy alliances. But also, don't make the mistake of overestimating your enemies. They have no power. They are, from God's perspective, notice the language that is used, smoldering stubs of firewood.

Notice there in verse 4, as it continues the message, do not lose heart because of these two smoldering stubs of firewood. You see, in the eyes of Ahaz, Syria and Israel were powerful enemies, intent on capturing Jerusalem and deposing him. And he didn't feel he had the power to withstand.

[12:03] And God says, Israel? Syria? They're just two smoldering stubs of firewood. They don't have any power. Don't be afraid of them. They have no power. But not only do they not have any power, God also says they have no pedigree. That's the intent, really, of the language we read there from verse 7 onwards, when God very clearly states to Ahaz, it will not take place. It will not happen.

What you fear, it's not going to happen. And then he says, why? For the head of Aram is Damascus. That is, the head of Syria is Damascus, its capital. And the head of Damascus is only resin.

You know, what God is saying is, who is this guy? You know, who are these people who threaten my people? And then he goes on, the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is only Remaliah's son. You know, if we could paraphrase it, God is saying, who are these people? Who are these people you're afraid of? You know, who are they? Nobody's heard of them. There is nothing in the grand scheme of things. You know, they have no power. They have no pedigree. But why are you afraid of these people, Ahaz? What else does he say? Well, he says they have no future. They have no power. They have no pedigree. They have no future. They will be shattered. They will be destroyed. Why do you tremble? Why do you shake as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind, to use the language that we have here in the passage? Why? So this is the message that God brings to Ahaz. But of course, the core of the message is found at the end of verse 9. If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all. And so God exhorts Ahaz. He gives Ahaz another opportunity. He has spurned many opportunities, but he has given another opportunity. Believe in me. Trust in me. Without faith, you are nothing.

Without faith, you are nothing. That is what God is saying to Ahaz. And what is the response of the king? We're not told what he immediately says, but the implication is that he was silent in the face of this message that is brought. And so, in verse 10, the Lord continues. Again, the Lord spoke to Ahaz.

It seems reasonable to imagine that this is an unbroken conversation or encounter. On the same occasion, Ahaz is silent. He doesn't say anything. And so again, the Lord spoke to Ahaz, clearly through the prophet Isaiah. And what does he say? Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights. This is an astonishingly gracious offer on the part of God. Here we have a king who had already shown himself to be a rebel before God. Here is a king who had already shown himself to be one who gave no merit or no worth to God and to His Word. Here is a king who had ridden roughshod over all that he had received and all the heritage that he was carrying forward. And yet God, in the face of all this provocation, he comes to Ahaz and he says, look, ask for a sign. If you don't believe the plain words that I'm giving you, which should be more than sufficient, the arguments I present are more than adequate. But if you don't believe, ask for a sign. I'll give you a sign.

[15 : 39] Ask for any sign. You know, the language is very powerful, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights. You ask for a sign he has, and I'll give it to you. If that's your problem, that you're just not sure, you're just not comfortable with what I'm saying, you just find it difficult to believe, well, ask for a sign. I'll give you a sign. As I say, it's astonishingly gracious in the part of God, the patience that He is showing with this man. Maybe it's worth just posing the question before we continue with the kind of the historical overview. Is God not the same today? Does He not still show that astonishing grace and patience to us who are so often rebels and stubborn and unwilling to believe, and yet He continues to prod and to invite us to put our trust in Him? Well, so it was with Ahaz. Well, the response of Ahaz to the offer that he has made, more than an offer, really, a command of God that he would ask for a sign of God, what is Ahaz's response? We have it in verse 12. But Ahaz said, I will not ask. I will not put the Lord to the test. Now, if we only had that verse, we would say, oh, how pious of Ahaz. You know, what a holy man. He says, oh, no, I certainly couldn't do that. Who am I to put the Lord to the test? But it's the Lord Himself who is saying to him.

You know, this wasn't some idea of some counselor. This wasn't some courtier in the court who said, why don't you ask the God for a sign? No, God is saying, ask for a sign. And he said, no, I won't. I won't ask for a sign. Though he couches it in this very pious, seemingly holy language. But all it is, is unbelief. All it is, is disobedience. No doubt in his own mind, he's already decided that he wants an alliance with Assyria. And if he asks for a sign and God grants him the sign, then that's going to put him in a really awkward position. And so he doesn't want to ask for a sign.

He wants to carry on with what he's decided to do, which is to go cap in hand to Assyria. And so he refuses God's command that he would ask for a sign.

What happens then? Are we to be left without a sign? Well, not at all. In the absence of Ahaz requesting a sign, God takes the initiative and indicates that a sign will be given. And this, of course, brings us to the pivotal text that we are concerned with.

Then Isaiah said, verse 13, A sign will be given to Ahaz. Indeed, a sign will be given to the whole of Judah.

[18 : 34] And this sign that will be given is a sign with a meaning and a message. And the message is clear. God with us. Emmanuel, God with us. Now, this verse in Isaiah, as I was commenting just before we read the passages in question, this verse is one that we ordinarily approach, looking over our shoulders, as it were, from Matthew chapter 1. Our starting point is Matthew and Isaiah 7 verse 14 merits perhaps a backward glance that allows us to come to a conclusion. And the conclusion is clear enough.

The sign of the child named Emmanuel is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. That's what Matthew says. So, it's not a particularly surprising conclusion. Matthew says that what Isaiah had prophesied is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. And so, we come to that conclusion quite reasonably and understandably.

But we need to do more. We can't only look back from Matthew and say, well, yes, there's the sign and here is its fulfillment. We need to do more. We need to remove ourselves from Nazareth at the dawn of the first century and place ourselves in Jerusalem in the eighth century before Christ and understand this sign in its original historical setting. What we need to do is to do justice to the meaning of the sign for the original audience, very significantly Ahaz, but also all of Judah, and the meaning of the sign as it is subsequently and famously used by Matthew in his gospel. And the manner in which we will endeavor to do this is by considering this sign of Emmanuel from three perspectives, very briefly.

Three perspectives. The first perspective from which we need to consider the sign is this one, Emmanuel true for Ahaz, or if you wish, the immediate fulfillment. But then secondly, Emmanuel true in Jesus, if you wish, the messianic fulfillment. And then very briefly, we will also note this, Emmanuel true forever, or the continuing fulfillment. First of all then, Emmanuel true for Ahaz. Ahaz is the one who God is inviting to ask for a sign. He refuses to do so.

But God says, well, I'm going to give you a sign anyway. And this is the sign I'm giving you, Ahaz. This is the sign that I'm giving you, O house of David, to Judah. This is the sign I'm giving to you.

[21 : 16] And the sign is there. We've read it. The virgin will be with child, and will give birth to a son, and will call him Emmanuel. And of course, the following verses go on to describe him in greater detail. And as we think of this sign as being true for Ahaz, there's three aspects that we need to notice. First of all, in the sign as it is announced, there is a clear indication that the sign will be given in the immediate future. Now, we know that the sign finds its fulfillment in the birth of Jesus, and we'll come to that. But as we read in Isaiah, it's very clear, it seems to me, that the language suggests, indicates that there will be an immediate fulfillment. Because notice what immediately Isaiah goes on to say concerning this child to be born in verse 15. He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right. But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

So, there is a precise and specific historical reference to Israel and Syria. That's what we've been told about. Jerusalem is threatened by Israel and Syria. That's what Ahaz is worried about. That's what he needs to decide what to do about. And God comes through the prophet Isaiah and says, a child will be born. And before that child, before he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, and we won't spend time deciding what that means exactly. But what is evidently clear is, during his lifetime, as he is a child, before that happens, you will be free of the danger from the north that you so tremble before. So, there is this clear indication that the sign will have an immediate future, but immediate future fulfillment. It will be given in the immediate future.

Which then takes us on to the next aspect that we need to think about, and that is the manner in which the sign will be given. There's a clear indication that it will be given to Ahaz in his own lifetime, in the immediate future, following the announcement. But what about the manner in which the sign will be given? Well, in verse 714, you know, this central or pivotal verse, we read of a child being born.

And as we continue to read through chapter 7 and into chapter 8, as we did earlier in the service, what do we find? Well, we find that at the beginning of chapter 8, a child is born. Now, I'm a simple fellow, but if I read in chapter 7 that there will be this sign, and the sign will involve a child being born, and as I continue reading, and immediately after I read of a child being born, I think, well, you know, there is likely to be a connection between these two things.

Then in chapter 8, verses 3 and 4, Then I went to the prophetess, this is Isaiah speaking, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the Lord said to me, Name him Maher Shalal Hashbass. Before the boy knows how to say, my father or my mother, the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria. And notice there what is said in chapter 8, not only are we told that a child will be born, but we're told that one of the characteristics of the child will be precisely what we have been told concerning the child to be born called Emmanuel. What was said of this child Emmanuel, what was said was that while he was still a child, the threat from the north would be removed. And that is precisely what we find in chapter 8, that this child born to Isaiah, to Isaiah's wife, before the boy knows how to say, my father or my mother, the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria. They'll be destroyed by the Assyrians. And so it seems to me reasonable, and this is a passage that is known of so many versions and opinions and interpretations, but it seems reasonable to me that what we find in chapter 7 concerning this child, this sign, this child who will come, finds fulfillment, certainly immediate or partial fulfillment, in the birth of this boy referred to in chapter 8. Now, there are difficulties with making that identification, and we can just briefly comment some of the difficulties there are, not out of a sense of curiosity, but also simply to have a clearer understanding of what is being proposed. One difficulty, a very evident one, is that the prophetess referred to there in verse 3 of chapter 8, Isaiah's wife, is not a virgin. Evidently, she is not a virgin. Even the language used in verse 3, then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Discreet but very clear language referring to an encounter that produces this son. So, she wasn't a virgin. Does this mean that we can't identify this child with the one prophesied in the previous chapter? I think we still can, and I think we still can because of the, what we might call the ambiguity of the word in Hebrew that is used in verse 14 of chapter 7, translated a virgin. Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign, the virgin will be with child, and will give birth to a son. Now, when I speak of the ambiguity concerning how best to translate that word, I'm not for a moment suggesting, and I want to be very clear here, that virgin isn't a legitimate translation. Indeed, I would go further. I would say it is, of the options available, the best option to translate the Hebrew word as virgin. We'll comment on that more in a moment. But it is the case that the word in Hebrew does not have the word in English, virgin, as a direct equivalent. There are other possibilities. The word could be translated as maiden or young woman. That would be a legitimate translation, though virgin, for reasons that we won't go into right now, is probably the best option. But that ambiguity seems to me opens the door to identifying the son of Isaiah, spoken of in chapter 8, as the immediate fulfillment of the sign promised to Ahaz. Another objection that some make is, well, that's not a very remarkable sign, that Isaiah's wife should give birth to a child. Surely it had to be something a bit more remarkable, but of course, signs don't have to be remarkable. Sometimes they are, and sometimes they're not.

[27 : 56] It's entirely within God's prerogative whether the sign He gives are remarkable or unremarkable. The fact that a sign is unremarkable doesn't make it any less a sign. And of course, that particular concern is also addressed by the fact that this is only a partial fulfillment.

The ultimate fulfillment, as we'll see in a moment, is, of course, altogether remarkable, beyond remarkable. But this immediate partial fulfillment, indeed, is not particularly remarkable.

Another concern is that the child isn't given the name Emmanuel. And you might say, well, in chapter 7 it states so clearly, you know, the child is going to be called Emmanuel. But we come to chapter 8 and He's given some other unpronounceable name. Seems cruel to give a child such a long name.

But anyway, the point is it's not Emmanuel. And you might say, well, that can't be the fulfillment if He's given a different name. That concern, I think, loses weight when we recognize that when Jesus is born and nobody questions that in the birth of Jesus we have the messianic ultimate fulfillment of the sign, He isn't given the name Emmanuel either. He's given the name Jesus. And so Emmanuel, rather than to be understood as a personal name, is a name that points to the truth that He is announcing concerning God being with His people.

So this sign, this child who is to be called Emmanuel, this sign is true for Ahaz. And of course, tragically and sadly, Ahaz and Judah did not receive the sign. They did not recognize the way in which God was graciously not only giving them the warnings and the opportunity to repent, but even the sign that they were given, it was one that they chose to ignore. So, Emmanuel, true for Ahaz, the clear indication that there would be an immediate fulfillment, the manner in which the sign is given. But we also have to notice the reality of this sign for Ahaz, for Judah, as a double-edged sword. Now, why do I call it a double-edged sword? Well, the sign is a message, God with us. But how does the presence of God manifest itself in the experience of unbelieving Ahaz and Judah? How does God manifest

[30 : 21] Himself as being God with us? Well, certainly in deliverance. The immediate threat from Israel and from Syria is dealt with by God. We've already read in chapter 7 and verse 16 how the two kings that Ahaz dread will be laid, will be laid waste. God with His people, dealing with the enemies of His people.

So, there is deliverance. And the theme of deliverance is prominent in these chapters, God delivering His people from this immediate enemy, God with us. But of course, God with us in the experience of Ahaz and Judah was not just about deliverance. It was also about judgment. Because, you see, the same God who destroys Israel and Syria, this same God allows the Assyrians to then proceed to invade Judah and Jerusalem as an instrument of God's judgment upon Judah.

Notice there in verse 17 of chapter 7, the Lord will bring on you and on your people, here He's speaking to Ahaz and to Judah, will bring on you and on your people and in the house of your father, a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah. He will bring the king of Assyria, not to deliver you, not to rescue you, but to invade you and to conquer you. And so, yes, God with us is a sign that speaks of deliverance, but it is also a sign that speaks of judgment.

But notice also, and we have to do this so briefly, but notice also that even judgment is tinged with grace in the preservation of a remnant, for there is the assurance that even though Assyria will overwhelm Judah, there will be a remnant that remains. The language that is used in chapter 8 of the waters coming up to the neck of Judah, but just up to the neck, just up to the neck. So, there is this language of a remaining remnant, and this theme of a remaining remnant is also found in other ways. Indeed, Isaiah's first son, the one who accompanied him to the aqueduct, the name, or the meaning of his name is, a remnant shall return. So, even in the face of judgment, this aspect of God with us, not only deliverance, but judgment, but even in the judgment, tinged with grace and with the preservation of a remnant. And this is a solemn truth regarding the presence of

God, a solemn truth to be associated with the name Emmanuel, as the name will ring in our ears in these Christmas weeks. It's a solemn truth to remember that the name does announce the deliverance and protection and blessing of God, but it is also a name that warns of judgment for those who reject and despise Emmanuel. But then, secondly, and much more briefly, Emmanuel true in Jesus. We said that there would be three aspects to this sign, Emmanuel true for Ahaz, but Emmanuel true in Jesus. And as with Emmanuel as being true for Ahaz, in this regard, true in Jesus, there is in the original prophecy a clear indication, or certainly implication, that the sign spoken of requires a fuller and messianic fulfillment.

[33 : 52] The use of the word that we've touched on very briefly, translated virgin, especially the way that word is translated in the Septuagint, which is the Latin translation of the, sorry, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. There the Greek word that is used to translate virgin is a word explicitly meaning virgin. And of course, that was done 200 years before the birth of Jesus. But more significantly than the way that the word is translated in the Septuagint, in Isaiah itself, we have this continuing development of the messianic child theme. Very particularly as we move into chapter 9 and words that are so familiar to us. In chapter 9 and in verse 6, for to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders, and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Surely the child spoken of in chapter 9 is to be identified with the child spoken of in chapter 7. Surely we're not talking about different children here, the same child. And the way he is described in chapter 9 certainly does not match the child born to Isaiah spoken of in chapter 8. There is a partial fulfillment, but a fuller messianic fulfillment awaits and must await. And of course, we know that that is so, because we know, as Matthew makes clear to us, that the child is indeed the one born in Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus, where Jesus is not just a symbol of God with us, not one who simply points to the truth of God with us, but as the one who is God with us. Jesus, not only the one who will deliver his people from Syria or Assyria or Babylon or Rome, but the one who will deliver his people from their sin. So, Emmanuel, true in Jesus. It was necessary in the original prophecy that there would be a fuller and an ultimate fulfillment. The manner in which that comes true is in the birth of Jesus. But you know, in the birth of Jesus, there remains the reality of the sign as a double-edged sword. Yes, deliverance. Notice how in Matthew chapter 1 and in verse 23, notice how Isaiah chapter 7 and verse 14 is said to be fulfilled. You can just read that briefly in Matthew chapter 1 and in verse 23. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, which means God with us. And then we really need to go back to verse 22 as well. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet. The point

I'm making here simply is this, that the theme of deliverance is very clearly found in this passage in Matthew because the way in which the Isaiah prophecy is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus, who saves his people from their sins. So, Emmanuel, as one who brings deliverance, is so evident and to the fore.

But is it not also the truth that as we walk through and accompany Jesus in his ministry, that judgment was also part of his ministry? Was that not his consistent message that, yes, he came to save, he came to deliver, but for those who reject his saving advances that awaits only judgment? So, Emmanuel, true for Ahaz, Emmanuel true in Jesus, but finally, Emmanuel true forever. And for this we turn not to Isaiah, but to Matthew. Matthew's gospel can be seen as beginning and ending with this central truth of Emmanuel. At the beginning of Matthew's gospel, in the verse that we are concerned with, God with us. But when we go to the very end of Matthew's gospel, what do we find? We find this same truth. In the very final verse, as part of the Great Commission, what is it that Jesus says to his disciples, and surely I am with you always to the very end of the age? So, Emmanuel at the beginning and Emmanuel at the end, two bookends, holding the gospel together. And the fact that the gospel ends with Emmanuel, what is the implication?

Well, the implication is this, that the child born of a virgin, the promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, he remains with his disciples. Though he ascends to the right hand of the Father, he remains with his disciples, with his church, with us. Indeed, he is with us in a manner even more wonderful than when he trod the dusty paths of Galilee. Listen to what Jesus himself said to his disciples in this regard. But I tell you the truth, it is for your good that I am going away.

Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. Emmanuel in the person of the Holy Spirit. So, this sign of Emmanuel, yes, it was true for Ahaz, though ignored by Ahaz. It is wonderfully true in Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us, but it is true forever.

[39 : 17] It continues to be true for God's people today. And so, how are we to respond? How are we to respond to Emmanuel? One way in which we can consider this question of our response is to notice an intriguing change in the language that we have in Isaiah chapter 7, where the sign is first announced, and in Matthew chapter 1, where Matthew quotes from Isaiah. Just one little change that I want you to notice. We read in Isaiah 1, the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Emmanuel. The implication, she will call him Emmanuel. The one who gives birth will call him Emmanuel. But then when we turn to Matthew, there is this very minor, seemingly insignificant change. And as we read it, maybe you will notice and pick up on it. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel. No longer she will call him

Emmanuel, but they will call him Emmanuel. Why do I draw attention to that? Well, I think it helps us to focus on this matter of our response. Who are they? Who are they who will call this child Emmanuel?

Well, they are all those who embrace Jesus as Emmanuel. They are those who put their trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord. And the question for us this morning, the question for you, is are you among the they? Is Jesus your Emmanuel? Is Jesus the one you have embraced as your Redeemer, as your Deliverer, the one in whom God is with you and for you forever? Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we come at the close of the list.

We come again with the full Cymbal with the Holy Spirit of the Holy Spirit of the Holy Spirit of the July of 1878. And we share so the verses inside us that ah Lord took our baby right into a promise for the baby right with you and for you... We're with your Changed-Path Zainde. Everybody knew it came to our Lord stud, watching the Soren pomics that makes great some messages and watching everything. engine plan 2000. I know that's the fact that I am so wa■ of the leading history. I believe that yes, enjoy Osareem, but let us pray.