

**Confrontation with Crisis:
When Crisis Confronts our Faith
Isaiah 7:1-9; 2 Kings 16:7-9**

Dr. Steve Horn

September 9, 2018

Text Introduction: With the exception of a few Sundays here and there for special emphases, we are going to be in the book of Isaiah from now until the end of the year. We are going to consider this book from the general theme of “Crisis,” because it is a prophetic message from a time of crisis in Isaiah’s day, focused on the nation of Israel and more precisely, Judah. First we are going to examine the *Confrontation* that comes from Crisis. Beginning today, for a few Sundays, we are going to examine the text to see how crisis confronts us, starting with our faith. Then, we are going to consider passages of *Comfort* in the midst of our Crisis. We are then going to consider some *Challenges* we face in the midst of crisis. Finally, in the month of December we will isolate the *Christ* for our Crisis.

Isaiah 1:1 indicates that Isaiah preached these prophetic messages contained in the book during the reigns of Uzziah (also called Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Second Kings 15-20 gives us a reference point for the time of Isaiah’s prophecy. The years covered are 740 B.C. to at least 701 B.C. Some would say that there is evidence that Isaiah’s prophetic ministry lasted until nearly 680 B.C. We must remind ourselves that this time frame puts us in the midst of the divided kingdom (Israel in the North, Judah in the South). In fact, even though Isaiah’s prophecy is focused on Judah in the South, the fall of the Northern kingdom would have happened during his ministry. “Judah faces extinction at the hands of the cruel Assyrians. In this crucial hour of national emergency, God sends Isaiah—a unique man with an unpleasant message. The nation of Judah is rotten to the core and ripe for judgment. Her habitual sins of idolatry, hypocrisy, injustice and corruption have not escaped the notice of her holy God. His righteous wrath will soon fall upon king and commoner alike, that all might learn that the Lord Almighty cannot and will not be mocked.”¹

Many commentators on the whole of Isaiah outline the messages of Isaiah around three major crises that happened during his lifetime. The first crisis is the subject of our text today. The threat is from Syria made worse by the unholy alliance that Ahaz made with Assyria.

Text: This took place during the reign of Ahaz, son of Jotham, son of Uzziah king of Judah: Aram’s King Rezin and Israel’s King Pekah son of Remaliah went to fight against Jerusalem, but they were not able to conquer it.

²When it became known to the house of David that Aram had occupied Ephraim, the heart of Ahaz and the hearts of his people trembled like trees of a forest shaking in the wind.

³The LORD said to Isaiah, “Go out with your son Shear-jashub to meet Ahaz at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, by the road to the Launderer’s Field. ⁴Say to him: Calm down and be quiet. Don’t be afraid or cowardly because of these two smoldering sticks, the fierce anger of Rezin and Aram, and the son of Remaliah. ⁵For Aram, along with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has plotted harm against you.

¹ *The Daily Walk Bible*, p. 809.

They say, ⁶“Let us go up against Judah, terrorize it, and conquer it for ourselves. Then we can install Tabeel’s son as king in it.”

⁷This is what the Lord GOD says:

It will not happen; it will not occur.

⁸The chief city of Aram is Damascus,

the chief of Damascus is Rezin

(within sixty-five years

Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people),

⁹the chief city of Ephraim is Samaria,

and the chief of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.

If you do not stand firm in your faith,

then you will not stand at all.

Introduction: Perhaps you have heard it said, “We are always in a crisis, just coming out of a crisis, or about to be in a crisis.” So life seems to be. And, this tests our faith or confronts our faith. That is why Isaiah is more than just a history lesson for us, but real-life, practical help for us as we deal with our own crises.

We start our study in Isaiah 7 because this is the first point of crisis during Isaiah’s prophetic ministry. Chapters 1-5, commentators usually say, are introductory. Chapter 6 introduces us to the man, Isaiah, by revealing his call. So, after introducing the messages of Isaiah and introducing the man, Isaiah, chapter 7 begins in earnest the prophetic messages of Isaiah.

Isaiah 7 is an example of spoken prophecy. God used Isaiah to speak a message to King Ahaz. The message is to depend upon Him for victory. Isaiah prophesies that though enemies say they will invade, they will not. They must have faith in God’s message (7:7-10). But, instead of depending upon God for victory, Ahaz formed a treaty with the king of Assyria, Tiglath-Pileser. This is an example of Judah’s continued disobedience to the message of God. Their continued disobedience leads to their ultimate fall.

In order to see how this text applies to us, let us observe these parts.

The Analysis of the Crisis (7:1-2)

As we read verses 1 and 2, we must ask two questions.

1. Was this really a crisis?

Where’s the crisis? They came, but they were not able to conquer.

2. Did Ahaz and his people create their own crisis?

I’ve been reading from the book of Joshua this week. In the book of Joshua, the book of the Bible that tells us of the original conquest of Israel into the Land of Promise, we read that Israel’s enemies trembled at the mere sound of the Armies of Israel. In Joshua 2, the words of Rahab reveal the thoughts of those who occupy the Land of Promise. “Everyone is panicking because of you. We lost heart.) Joshua 2:8, 11, 24) But in Joshua 7 after Israel was defeated Ai, they

panicked. Israel lost heart. (Joshua 7:5) What was the difference? Trust in God. The same is true here.

What we might believe to be crisis is often a crisis of our own making. Most of the things that we might call crisis are the result of either our own sin or our own lack of faith.

At 8:17 on the evening of March 3, 1943, bomb-raid sirens went off in London, England. Workers and shoppers stopped and looked to the skies. Buses came to an immediate halt. People raced for cover. One of the places that they sought protection was the Bethnal Green Underground Station. Reportedly, in the rush to enter the underground protection area, someone slipped causing mass chaos. The end result was 173 people were crushed to their death. The irony of the story about the air raid in London is that no bombs were dropped that day. Further irony to that story is that the largest single number of casualties due to an air raid in London was 68.² More people died as a result of the panic than of any actual bombing. The lesson from these events is that panic can cause worse destruction than actual difficult events. That's why we must be careful not to create our own crisis.

God's Appeal for Us to Take Courage (7:3-25)

Notice the four phrase of verse 4.

- Trust God's Word.

In this particular context, Isaiah gave Ahaz a direct word from the Lord. "It will not happen." But, apparently, Ahaz did not trust that word. Verses 10-13 seem to bear that out. Ahaz did not want to seek the Lord for a sign even when God is telling him to seek a sign. Could it be that Ahaz was afraid of what the answer would be and then his disobedience is further exposed? He is really not interested in trusting God.

- Trust God's Presence.

Look at verse 10.

¹⁰Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz: ¹¹"Ask for a sign from the LORD your God—it can be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven."

¹²But Ahaz replied, "I will not ask. I will not test the LORD."

¹³Isaiah said, "Listen, house of David! Is it not enough for you to try the patience of men? Will you also try the patience of my God? ¹⁴Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.

I love this. God gave a sign anyway in the form of a message. We know this to be fulfilled in Jesus. But, what does Immanuel mean? "God with us." Don't fear, God is with you.

- Trust God's Judgment.

² Max Lucado, *Fearless*, 175 and 176 and Wikipedia.

The rest of this chapter deals with the judgment. Judgment that God will bring on Judah's enemies, but also judgment that God will bring on Judah if Ahaz leads them to disobey the word of the Lord.

The Aftermath of Our Choice (2 Kings 16:7-9)

So Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, saying, "I am your servant and your son. March up and save me from the grasp of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are rising up against me." ⁸ Ahaz also took the silver and gold found in the LORD's temple and in the treasuries of the king's palace and sent them to the king of Assyria as a bribe. ⁹ So the king of Assyria listened to him and marched up to Damascus and captured it. He deported its people to Kir but put Rezin to death.

With opportunity to either trust God or another King, King Ahaz chose to trust the other king.

I am reminded of Psalms 20:7. "Some trust in chariots and some trust in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God."

I think about the verses we examined in Proverbs 3:5-6 just a few weeks ago. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.

I think of the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 1. "We all have the sentence of death within ourselves, so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God, the One who has power even to raise the dead."

What will you choose for your crisis? Are you going to trust another? Are you going to trust yourself? Are you going to trust luck? Are you going to trust your money? Are you going to trust your employer? What if you committed yourself again to trust God?

So What?

If you do not stand firm in your faith, then you will not stand at all.

- Calm Down
- Be Quiet
- Don't be Afraid
- God's got this and even better
- God's got you

What if the current crisis is just that which God is using to expose the source of your total trust?

Like it or not, just as we say in our parts about hurricanes, the next one is coming. About crisis we can say the next crisis is coming. What are you going to do when the next crisis comes?

Philip Yancey is an author. He has written a lot about his own faith journey. He once told about his father-in-law, who was a Bible teacher through his life and found troubling times in his last days. A nerve disease robbed him of almost all of his motor skills. He could not be up and around. His 39-year-old

daughter battled a severe form of diabetes. Because of these health and family matters, financial pressures mounted. In the midst of all of this, He took a piece of paper and he said, "This I believe." He wrote down three things:

Number 1 – life is difficult. Number 2 – God is merciful. Number 3 – heaven is certain.

If you do not stand firm in your faith, then you will not stand at all.