



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Isaiah 7:1-25

“The Virgin's Son: The Divine Sign”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father we ask Thy blessing upon us as we look again at the Book of Isaiah. We thank Thee for these indications in the prophetic word of the great things that Thou art doing among men. We thank Thee that many hundreds of years before he came and 2500 years before our time, the plans of God were already in operation and were being brought to fruition. And as we ponder again those sections of Scriptures which at times are strange to us, help us Lord to understand them and to profit from them. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Now we are turning tonight to the first chapter of the Book of Immanuel which is the seventh chapter of the Book of Isaiah. If you have ever read any commentaries on the Book of Isaiah, you will often find students of the word referring to chapters 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 as “The Book of Immanuel.” Now the reason that they do this is because in these chapters, chapters 7 through 12, we have one of these wonderful Old Testament messianic passages, which give us before the time of our Lord Jesus revelation concerning him. So the first chapter in the Book of Immanuel, the Virgin's son, the divine sign.

After chapter seven, we have seen Isaiah as the analyzer of the inner morals of Israel's society. He has told us the things that are wrong with that society and he has with remarkable insight, pointed out the apostasy and corruption and decay, spiritual decay as well as other forms of decay in the heart of the life of the nation. But now in the seventh chapter of the Book of Isaiah we are introduced to Isaiah as the greatest political power in Israel since the time of David.

And I think that Isaiah became this for two reasons. In his day and in his times, the world was getting considerably smaller and we of course today are living in a day when the world has never been so small. One day we can be in Mexico, the next day we can be in Russia. We can sit down before our TVs and we can turn to one channel and we can look at Mexico and turn to another channel and look at Mexico to look at Russia or keep it tuned at one channel and see all of the countries of the world. But in Isaiah's day, in his times, the world was becoming smaller and for this reason, the prophecies that God gave to the prophets began to assume more than a national character. They began to become international and skilled. And so many of the things that Isaiah prophesied were not only things that concern Israel, but they concern the kingdoms of the world. And then there is another reason why Isaiah became perhaps the greatest political power in Israel since the time of David, it was his faith. He was a man who had remarkable vision. He was a man who did not look upon his God as a simple national deity but he saw Jehovah as Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

I think it would help us as we come to this section of Isaiah particularly to remember the times in which he lived. The two greatest nations with which Isaiah dealt and about which he wrote were the nations of Egypt and Assyria. Assyria had begun to stir itself and it was already a world power but he did not become a tremendous power by 735 AD, and Isaiah, remember, began to prophecy at 740 BC, I should say.

The other great country was Egypt; it was on the north, the other on the south. Assyria was troubled by Babylonia always and from time to time in its history, battles

were fought with Babylonia over world dominion. But at the present time, Assyria was in the ascendancy. Her troubles were largely with Babylon. Egypt was the southern power, and Egypt was troubled by the fact that a division existed within it, with lower and upper Egypt at odds with one another, so that the two great powers were Egypt on the south, Assyria on the north.

Then of course there was Israel. Israel was composed of two kingdoms, northern Israel for remember, there had been a division in Israel about Isaiah's time, and the southern kingdom of Judah. Now northern Israel was on the route of the armies and the commerce between the north and the south. For if one wanted to move from Egypt to the south to Assyria in the north, he generally made his way up by the Mediterranean Sea when he came to Galilee, he crossed to the north of the sea of Galilee on into Syria and finally into Assyria. So that northern Israel was on the land, was on the way of the great commercial route. In fact, that is why Galilee, by the way is called Galilee -- by way of the sea, for it was by the way that men traveled.

Judah, however, was different. Judah was a little country that had some altitude, it was a little out of the way and consequently it was more confined. And it was to Judah and Jerusalem that Isaiah primarily had his ministry. And of course he was very anxious from the standpoint of politics to see that Judah did not become involved in the world politics of his day. He felt, as he sought to discover the mind of God that Israel's purposes were best served by remaining outside of the struggles of the time. Do not call in the Assyrians for he knew the nature of the Assyrians. Do not call in the Egyptians. Do not lean on Egypt for strength. Do not lean Assyria for strength. Trust in the Lord our God and stay out of the conflicts of the day.

The Assyrians are important in this section and I would like to say just a word about them. The king of Assyria at this time was a man by the name Tiglath-Pileser. He is not any Tom, Dick or Harry, I assure you. Now Tiglath-Pileser, the name is spelled sometimes Pil-neser, and also he is referred to by the name Pul. Tiglath-Pileser was the

king of the Assyrians. He came to the throne in 735 AD. The Assyrians were famous for their ferocity. They were very savage. They were worse than the Romans and the Indians put together. And so of course they were a terror to the nations of their day. Now another thing I think that we should bear in mind when we come to this chapter is the fact that the nations of that time and Judah itself fell prey to this, regarded their gods as just useful entities.

I think one of the most interesting things is the statement that Edward Gibbon once made. He said this: “The various modes of worship which prevailed in the Roman world were all considered by the people as equally true by the philosophers as equally false, and by the magistrates as equally useful.” And you know we are living in days exactly like that. For the people today regard all religions as equally true. It does not make a bit of difference whether it is Protestantism or Roman Catholicism or Judaism or Mohammedanism or Bahaim or whatever it is. The natural tendency of men is to regard them all as equally true. Now the philosophers regard them as equally false. They think it is vain to be interested in religion. Men are interested only in religion because we are born with some kind of quirk which makes us interested in spiritual things. But all religions are false. And have you also noticed too how our authorities regard all religions as essentially useful. They like it because they know that people who are religious are generally in favor of law and order. And consequently they regard religions as equally useful.

Now in Isaiah's day, the gods of the ancient world were simply regarded as useful. They were used by the leaders of that time. And Judah's king, Ahaz fell into the same trap. For he too because of the apostasy that existed in the land, had come to believe that the gods were simply useful entities.

Will you turn with me to 2 Chronicles chapter 28 in verse 23, for here we have in this passage an account of some of the things that touch our 7th chapter of the Book of Isaiah. By the way, if you are reading background material on Isaiah chapter 7, the

chapters are 1 Kings chapter 15 and 1 Chronicles chapter 28. They describe Ahaz's rain forest. But notice verse 23, we read in verse 22 "And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord, this is not King Ahaz. For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus which smote him; and said, "Because the gods of the kings of Syria helped them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me."

But then the Chronicle adds "But they were the ruin of him, and of all of Israel." I think you can see then the tremendous strength and originality of the prophets. For they lived in a day when men fought of the gods as being simply useful and to be used and at this time the prophets of Israel stood up and they proclaimed the one true God, the Lord Jehovah, who was the unique god and whom if men serve, they should be blessed but whom if they did not serve would be responsible for their destruction and I think you can see the remarkable originality of these men and also some of the struggles that they faced. The same type of struggle that a man faces today when he enters the pulpit of a church and proclaims that it is only through the truth of our Lord Jesus Christ that we may come to know God and that there is no other way of salvation except through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know of course that the minute you start doing that, you are called "intolerant" and you are called a "bigot".

Now this is the same type of thing that the prophets faced in that day but yet in spite of that they proclaimed the greatness of the Jehovah whom they knew. While King Ahaz had been a great king and Jotham who had succeeded him had also been a good king but now in Isaiah Chapter 7 we see coming on the scene King Ahaz. Someone has called Ahaz "The king of no faith" and he has come to the throne. King Ahaz, the king of no faith, and in Ahaz' life right here in the 7th chapter we come face to face with the truth that has tremendous application for us today and that truth is the need of what my friend in Houston by theme calls "The faith rest technique of Christian living" and what we find here is simply this; the truth that the word of God must be applied to our experience if we are to understand and if we are also in our lives to know the blessing of God, the

application of the word of God to our experience. Ahaz is the king of no faith and the things that God urges upon him in exhortation through Isaiah is simply that; reliance upon the word of God, reliance upon the prophecies, the promises which have been given and now stop for just a moment and exhort you for a second or two.

You see in the final analysis, it is not what your experience is. There are a lot of people who rush around to all types of experiences religiously. They hear about somebody who is speaking in tongues and they rush over there because they think that by this experience of speaking in tongues they may have some experience that will enable them to please the Lord better or some experience that they think they are missing in the Christian life.

And then others tell them that they ought to attend this kind of meeting and they attend meetings in which they get down upon their knees and they pray for the Holy Spirit to come upon them. And sometimes they attend meetings in which they pray that the Holy Spirit may come upon them, when someone moves around among them and puts their hand upon their hand and they are told all types of experiences that people have had. I can remember a few years back speaking to a friend of mine. She was a very intelligent woman. She had actually attended the Bible College but she told me of how she had attended a meeting in which the people were practicing the laying on of hands and when the laying on of hands took place the Holy Spirit came upon them. And I said, "Well, my Bible tells me that when I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ at that moment I receive the Holy Spirit. That is what stated in the Ephesians chapter 1 verses 13 and 14, John chapter 7 verses 37 through 39, Acts chapter 10, and Acts chapter 11. There is no laying on of hands to receive the Holy Spirit in the present day.

I said, "What was your experience?" And then she told me the sad experience of how she went to a certain church and she went into a room and there were two or three people in the room and it was the minister who went around laying hands on the heads of the people who were there and she was so worked up over this. She told me this.

She was so worked up over it that when she went into the little room he walked into the room and he said "I want you to be quite from the moment I am going to come in and I am going to lay my hands upon your head" and so he went out and after a little while he came in and she said "You know Louise, he walked in and he put his hand on my head and I immediately blacked out."

Now it is obvious that an experience like that is an experience that a spiritual kook has, and that is precisely what she was. It is the kind of experience that a person has when he says "God spoke to me today." I heard his voice, believe it or not I have people frequently who come to me and say "I had a vision the other night." My first impression, I must tell you, is to step off a couple of paces from the person [laughter] who has a vision but nevertheless, I have gotten so now I can you know just stay there and if they had a vision or these experiences that they have. But you know all of this kind of thing is not only contrary to the word of God, but it is the type of thing that makes me wonder about the mental sanity of the person who is involved in it because you see if we really believe things like this we are dwelling in spiritual kook-land, because God does not speak to us by voices today.

Now of course, he may give us conviction from the Holy Spirit who dwells within us but this conviction is always in accordance with the word of God. There is no Christian experience that is genuine experience which is not wedded to the words of holy Scripture and you can put that down as a fact. No Christian experience is a true Christian experience if it is not wedded to the words of holy Scripture. Now that means of course that it is tremendously important that we know the word of God. It is in the word of God that we learned the principles whereby we may have fellowship with God and all of our experience should be able to be explained in the light of the word of God. That is why it is so important for us to know the word of God and if we are to have the blessing of God upon our lives. That is, first of all, the requirement that we know the word of God. How

can we expect to live the word that we do not know? And so it is tremendously important that we know the promises but it is not enough to just know the premises.

Unfortunately, in the evangelical church that we know, there are people who do know a great deal about the word of God but who have applied practically nothing of it and they are disturbed and they are overwrought and they are distressed and when the simplest little experiences of life come, they are thrown and defeated by them. So what? The boss did not make you vice president in charge of the filing cabinets but there are some people who go into a tailspin immediately because they have not learned to rely upon the scriptures and apply them in their daily life. It is not enough to know the word of God but those great truths must be applied.

And do you know how they are applied? They are believed. That is all. They are believed. In other words, it is resting in the promises of God that brings spiritual victory. It is not what we do. It is our reliance upon a God who works. For example, Philippians chapter 2 verses 12 and 13 says "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both the will and to do of His good pleasure." Is not that an amazing thing? Work. It is God that worketh in you, both the will and the do of his good plan. He has this great problem, as we shall see, is he does not believe the word and he does not apply the word to his life.

Well now, we are going to talk for just a few moments about Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimitic war, and let me just set the scene, so that you will understand what happens here in these nine verses of the 7th chapter. Assyria is on the north, Egypt is on the south. Syria is just next to Israel as it is today. Damascus is the capital of Syria. Just to the north of Judah, is Northern Israel. Now of course Syria is very much disturbed about Assyria, because they are nearby. You see, power-politics is not a 20th Century phenomenon as you know if you studied any history. The history of the nations of the world is a history of the balancing of power down through the centuries.



So Syria is disturbed about Assyria, and Syria is confederate with northern Israel, sometimes called Ephraim, because Ephraim was the prominent tribe. So Syria and Ephraim would like to have Judah as an ally, but Isaiah and others are urging Judah to take no part. Well, the books of Chronicles and Kings tell us that Syria and Ephraim warned Judah that they are going to come, and they are going to take Judah and Ephraim, and they are going to set up a man by the name of Tabeel. The son of Tabeel we had referred to in this chapter, here in verse 6; "on the throne in Judah because Judah will not cooperate."

Now Ahaz is very much disturbed, because Syria and Northern Israel are going to attack him. And so, the only hope that he sees, is to call in Assyria. And if he calls in Assyria, of course he calls down Isaiah's wrath upon him. But he has that secret desire within his heart to call in Assyria. Why? Because he is not willing to trust in the Lord his God. Well now, the Books of Kings and Chronicles tell us, that Syria and Northern Israel did come up against Ahaz and Judah. And they disseminated and destroyed a great deal of the land, destroyed a number of the people, took a great number of them captive, but they were not able to take the city of Jerusalem itself. But Ahaz, in spite of the fact that Isaiah warned him not to do it, called in Assyria. And Assyria ultimately destroyed Syria and was responsible for the overthrow of Northern Israel and their captivity.

Afterwards, Ahaz visited Damascus and met Tiglath-Pileser there. And while he was there, he saw an idol's altar, which he admired very much. He was just like a man who looks, and is going to a strange town like Charleston, South Carolina, he has going in the antique shop and he has seen something he likes. And so he has got a lot of money and he sends word to his craftsman that he wants something made precisely like that, and so he makes a new altar. And of course, he displeases God very much by this. And as a result of the apostasy of the King, judgment comes upon the seventh Kingdom.

Now that is the background of this chapter and we are not exactly sure at the precise place at which this chapter fits into that story. But I am inclined to think that it fits

in right at the beginning, when Judah has been warned by Northern Israel and Syria that they are coming, and they are going to attack them unless Ahaz cooperates. And Ahaz is thinking about Assyria as protection against Northern Israel and Syria.

So let us begin reading with the 1st verse; "And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz, the Son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, King of Judah, the Rezin the King of Syria and Pekah, the son of Remaliah King of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it but could not prevail against it." Now this is an introductory summary of all that happens. But now, we are introduced to details in verse 2. And here we have Ahaz' response to the knowledge of this league that exists between Syria, not Assyria, but Syria and Northern Israel. And it was told the house of David, because Ahaz was at the house of David saying, "Syria is confederate with Ephraim and his heart was moved and the heart of his people as the trees of the forest are moved with the wind."

Is it not a vivid picture of a man who wavers because he does not believe the word of God? James you know, talks about the double-minded man who is unstable in all his ways. Do you know who is the strongest and the most courageous of men? The man who believes. And you will find that that is true down through history. The men who have been noted for their courage have been the men who have believed. And the men who have endured to the greatest extent and have left the finest marks for human courage, in human history, have been men who believe the God, of the word of God. But Ahaz, because he is King no faith, although he has the promises of God, when he hears this news while he shakes just like the trees of the forest, have moved with the wind.

Have you have any experiences like that? When trials come and faith seems to go out of the window? When a problem comes and you try to solve it in your own strength, and you become a double-minded man unstable in all your ways. What is the solution? The application of the word of God to Christian experience. What Ahaz should have done is, wait a minute wait a minute. The promises that have been given to Israel and to

Judah are promises that guarantee the stability of the Davidic throne. He has already given us a promise that this throne shall be sure and established and our rest in the word of God. "I do not care what Syria does, and I do not care what Northern Israel does, and I do not care what Assyria or Egypt does. My trust is in the Lord my God. And he would have had stability and also fruitfulness. But instead, he does not believe the promises that no doubt, he as the King, who sat on David's throne was acquainted with at least intellectually.

Will you turn with me to chapter 26 and verse 3? In chapter 26 and verse 3, Isaiah says; "Thou will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusted in Thee." That is a great promise. That is the promise that Ahaz should have known, but did not know. You know, there are two kinds of rest in the Bible. There is the rest of salvation. May I remove the outline? [Johnson moves visual aid] The Bible says that when Jesus Christ comes and dies for our sins, He provides a way of salvation for all men. And the word of God states, that when we believe this message concerning the crucified Son of God, we have salvation.

This is expressed for us in Matthew chapter 11 in verse 28. There in that verse, the Lord Jesus said; "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." That is the rest of salvation. That is the rest, when we believe the promises concerning the Lord Jesus Christ's finished work. That is how we become a Christian. We believe that Christ died for our sins and we take it by faith and say thank you Lord. The moment we do, then we have this rest of salvation. It is a gift. It is something that comes by grace. Our Lord goes on to say in the 29th verse; "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart and ye shall find rest in your souls."

Now that is the rest of sanctification. The rest of salvation comes when we believe in the finished work of the Lord Jesus. The rest, "that is the rest of salvation." The rest of sanctification comes when I am willing to trust the word of God which is given to me in the word of God. And when I trust that word of God, then I find the rest that God wants

me to have. That is what we call the faith rest technique. It is simply accepting the truth of the word of God and resting in it, concerning the cross for our salvation, concerning the Holy Spirit and all of the present activity of the Lord, of the Lord and the believer's life for sanctification.

And let us read on, verse 3. "Then said the Lord unto Isaiah go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou and shear Jesup thy son at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fullest field." Apparently, Ahaz thinking of the coming of the Syrian king with the northern Israel king is out inspecting his water supply to be sure that it is sufficient and so he says in verse 4, and say unto him take heed and be quiet. In other words, he is to have his eyes open but his heart is to be still.

That is translated in one of the versions tell him to quit worrying. Fear not neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking fire brands these are Pekah and Rezin; they are just like burnt out stumps, they are has-beens, that is all they are of what he says for the fierce anger of reason with Syria and of the son of Remaliah because Syria, Ephraim and the son of Remaliah have taken evil council against this saying, "Let us go up against Judah and vex it and let us conquer it for ourselves and set the king in the midst of it even the son of Tabeel." Thus sayeth the Lord God, "It shall not stand; neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin, and within three score and five years shall Ephraim be broken that it be not a people." Within 65 years I am going to destroy Israel, send them off into captivity and the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. Then he says, "If ye will not believe surely you shall not be established."

Now I wish you could read Hebrew because there is a great play on words here. Listen to it. It goes like this: *iymlok thamineu, kilob tha'manew* [Hebrew phonetic]. And you can catch the play on words between the Hebrew in this catchy way, and it has been translated to bring it out this way: "If in God you do not confide, surely in power you shall not abide" or "surely if you will not believe neither blessing shall you receive." And

God put this word through the prophet in this catchy way in order that Ahaz might get the message and might hold it. If in God you do not confide surely in power you shall not abide.

But you see Ahaz was carrying a secret around in his heart that Isaiah did not really completely know of. And that secret was this: There is something within my heart that means more to me than the promises of God. And you know what that was? Trust in Assyria. Have you ever been like that in the Christian life? Come on, confess. Have you ever felt that really deep down in your heart you had more trust in your own strength than you did in the promises of the word of God? I know you say you do not but I look at your actions and I say I do not. I would not dare get up and say that is was right to trust in self or in the world more than in the promises of God but what about my life?

How often when we get into difficulties we begin to scheme. Ever seen that happen? That happens in individual's lives and also by the way it happens in churches' lives. When they get in difficulty and the money does not come in, what do we they do? Well, go around and tap some of the wealthy people on the back and say look, we need this, we need that. We have a pledge system. What of the pledge system? That will get us out of a lot of difficulty. It is twice using your head, good business.

Now listen Ahaz could have replied just like that, it is good business to make friends with Assyria. It may be good business, but it is against the promises of God. And so often in our church life in and our individual life we flee to expediency when we get into difficulty, and oh, how important this text is if you will not believe, surely you shall not be established. If we do not take the word of God and apply it to our experience then we cannot expect to have any successful life in the will of God. The higher a man looks, the farther he sees and the difficulty that Ahaz was is he could not get he could not get his eyes off of Pekah and he could not get his eyes off of Rezin and if he had bothered to look up he might have seen God and if he had seen God he would not been worried about Rezin and about Pekah.

Is not the way we are too? If we can just get our eyes up enough to see God, then our needs will be met then the problems will find their solution. Or perhaps we do not understand how they are going to be solved right now, but we know that he solves all problems. He supplies all needs. He meets all of the needs that we have and we can find the solution there, but if we begin to battle, if we begin to scheme, if we begin to seek our own solutions in our own wisdom in our own strength because it is rational, good sense, good business you can be sure that God is going to do with us as he did with Israel. He is going to have to discipline us. And much of the discipline that we have in our lives is brought upon us because we are not willing to apply the word of God to our Christian experience.

Well now we come to the sign, verse 10 "Moreover, the Lord spoke again unto Ahaz saying", then you will notice now it is the Lord speaking directly. The Lord spoke again unto Ahaz, I think, through the prophet but the prophet lays great stress upon the fact that this comes from God saying, "Ahaz ask a sign of the Lord thy God, ask it in either in the depth or in the height above." In other words, let it be a sign in the earth like an earthquake. If you want an earthquake, we will have an earthquake. Or in the skies above if you want thunder and lightning, a storm to come we will arrange for that. Ask a sign in order that I may encourage you to believe the word of God. Signs by the way are for those who are not willing to believe the simple word.

So what does Ahaz do? He says, "I will." Now you can just see the hypocritical religious way in which he answers. Based on the word of God for do not you know? Deuteronomy chapter 6 in verse 16 says "Thou shalt not test the Lord Thy God." I want to use that text. And so Ahaz will say, "I will not ask neither will I test the Lord" but of course you see it is God who has asked him to accept the sign and so now God says, "All right, Ahaz. If you are not going to ask for a sign, I am going to give you a sign just the same." And the sign that follows, he says "Hear ye now House of David is it a small thing for you to weary men but when you weary my God also?" It is bad enough, you know,

to weary the prophet but to weary God with your unbelief that is worse. Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel. Ahaz, that is your sign.

Now let us stop for a moment because here is one of those amazing text that comes on the Bible suddenly and then almost that suddenly it vanishes from the word. When we come to the virgin birth our modern day scholars say, "This is a mundane tradition. We do not have to believe it." It is relatively unimportant. The important thing is not a virgin birth. The important thing is the person of Christ. Others who are not so tactful, by the way, those are statements made by some of our leading theologians in our established religious Protestant groups. Or if they are Unitarian, they will just say this is a birth legend but Isaiah says it was the Lord that spoke and he said that the virgin shall conceive. This text is ultimately the basis of the Apostles' Creed, conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary. So what does it mean? Is it a virgin birth? Really? And what does it mean?

Now of course if you read much in recent literature or translation you will notice that in quite a few of our translations, it is translated that the young woman shall conceive or a maiden shall conceive. I would not object to young woman. I would not object to maiden. But I understand that in the sense of a virgin. There are, I think, some excellent reasons why I am sure myself that Isaiah had in mind, as he wrote this prophecy, the virgin birth of our Lord Jesus. When you notice the name of this song, the Lord himself shall give you a sign, "Behold the virgin shall conceive of Thy son and shall call his name Immanuel." Immanuel means God with us. *Immanu* in Hebrew means "with us"; *el* means God.

Now how could this be a child of the prophetess, Isaiah's wife and Isaiah. God with us. While the only explanation of that term "God with us" is an explanation that goes to our Lord Jesus Christ. So the name of the child suggests it. Will you notice, too, that the sign is given to the house of David, not just to Ahaz but to all the land from

David on down. This is the sign. The King shall be born of a virgin. The House of David. Not just to Ahaz. Nor just to Isaiah. The House of David. And I am quite sure that since Ahaz was of the line of David, and he knew those great promises. After all, this was their birthright. To be born in the land of David, I think that Ahaz must have told his children and all of the ones told their children as the land progressed. Listen, God has told us that the Messiah to come, the Savior, is to be of our line. David, you remember, expressed this hope. He said that was his hope. The Lord did not establish his house as he was about to die, but he knew that he was going to do it someday. And all down the line, they told each child of what was to be expected.

Furthermore, if you take this word virgin and look at it throughout the bible, you will discover that it occurs in the Old Testament about seven times, as I remember. Perhaps only six. But in no case is it ever a reference to a married woman in the Old Testament. In some cases, it is clearly a reference to a virgin. In other cases, it is impossible to tell which, but never does it refer to a married woman. So I would gather from this that we are to take it in the sense in which it plainly appears in the passages in which we are uncertain. And that it refers to virgin.

Furthermore, the context suggests the supernatural. God has said to Ahaz, "Look Ahaz. Ask a sign. Ask it of heaven or ask it of Sheol. Let us have an earthquake or let us have some great sign in the heavens. Supernatural. And so Ahaz, I want to give you a sign, and it, too, is a supernatural sign. It is a virgin shall give birth to a child. But most of all, the great sweep of the prophecy of Isaiah and the Book of Immanuel, convinces me that a virgin is referred to here because as we are going to see when we progress through these wonderful chapters in the Book of Isaiah, that in the 7th chapter of Isaiah, we have Messiah about to be born. In the 9th chapter. Howard, would you read the Isaiah chapter 9 verses 6 and 7 aloud for us. Messiah is...Could you go ahead and read it now? [Inaudible, audience member reads].....The mighty God. For unto us a child is



born....that's enough..... unto us. A child is born unto us, a son is given and is named the mighty God.

[Johnson] Messiah about to be born, chapter 7; Messiah born, chapter 9; chapter 11, Messiah reigning. And I think you can see the sweep of this. Messiah about to be born, Messiah born, but here called mighty God. And here he is reigning. In other words, the one who is about to be born is the one who is born and who ultimately shall reign and he is the mighty God. Immanuel, God with us.

Now then, this prophecy then. Of course, I need not refer to the New Testament. The New Testament is beyond question. In Matthew chapter 1 verses 18 through 25, the story is told of how Mary gives birth to a child who was not fathered by Joseph for he knew that he was not the father of our Lord. You see the issue is really not as many of our contemporary theologians say, a Savior who is born as other men are born or a Savior born of a virgin, but the alternatives are a Savior born of a virgin or a Savior born illegitimately. For Joseph knew he was not the father of Jesus.

Now this sign is given and we do not have time tonight to look at the rest of the chapter, and I do not really think it is too important. The rest of the chapter tells us how the Assyrian is going to come because of Ahaz's unbelief and finally, the land is to be desolate and devastated because of their faithlessness.

In other words, God is going to exercise divine discipline before ultimate deliverance comes. As I conclude tonight, I would just like to say this about the virgin birth. The virgin birth is necessary as a doctrine for two reasons: If we do not have a virgin birth, we do not have a divinic Sovereign. And yet the bible promises that One is to come and will reign upon the throne of David among them. But if Jesus Christ is not born of a virgin, he is not the divinic Sovereign. You know why? Because in the Old Testament, in Jeremiah, chapter 22 in verse 30, a judgment is pronounced upon Coniah or Jeconiah who was of the land of David, and the statement is made "Write, this man is childless, that no man who is of his seed shall sit upon the throne of David to rule."

If our Lord is of the seed of Joseph who was the legal heir to the throne, he could not sit upon the throne because he comes under the curse. But you see, our Lord was not of the seed of Joseph. Joseph was the legal heir, Mary was not. Mary was simply of the Davidic line of David according to the flesh as was Joseph. Both were. But Joseph is the legal heir. Jesus, if he is to get the title to the throne must get it from Joseph. He cannot get it from Mary for Mary does not have it. It is in Joseph's line. But if he is born of Joseph, of Joseph's seed, he comes under the curse of Jeremiah. He cannot sit upon the throne even though he has right to sit upon it.

Joseph, you see, was the legal heir but he could not sit on the throne because he came under the curse of Jeconiah. So when you see Mary was pregnant by the Holy Ghost, Joseph had a decision to make. And his decision was finally settled by the appearance of the angel. And the angel said, "Joseph, fear not to take unto Thee Mary, Thy wife for that which is in her is conceived by the Holy Ghost." And so when Joseph took Mary to himself, he was officially saying that the woman and any issue from that woman are legalized as my heir. And so Jesus becomes the legal heir to the throne of David because he is Joseph's legal son. But he does not come under the curse because he is not of Joseph's seed. But he is of the seed of David because his human nature is derived from Mary.

And so he is of the seed of David according to the flesh possessing legal title through Joseph, but not disallowed by the curse upon Jeconiah because he was born of a virgin. And if he were not born of a virgin, he could not sit on the throne, but more than that, he could not be a divine Savior if he was not born of a virgin. For you see if our Lord Jesus was simply one of us, then he possessed a human nature such as we possess. And if he possessed a human nature such as you and I possess, then he possessed a sinful human nature. And if he possessed a sinful human nature, he cannot save anyone for he needs a Savior himself.

But because, he is born of a virgin, preserved from sin by the Holy Ghost, the sin of Mary and her nature, he now is able because of the divine human nature in this one divine person, he may now go to the cross, take upon himself the sins of the human race, act as our substitute because he is man and because he is God. They are in front of the judgment of God and come forth victorious. And so because he was born of a virgin, we can have a Savior. If he is not born of a virgin, we do not have a Savior, we do not have anybody ruling on the throne of David. In the final analysis, most denials of the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus is the denial of the supernatural. That is really the basic reason why most men will not accept the virgin birth. They just say it cannot happen. If you cannot understand it, then it cannot happen. We cannot really believe in the supernatural. And so the credibility rests ultimately upon the miraculous. Can we believe that God is great enough to perform a supernatural act?

And personally, I feel that there is no question whatsoever that God is not imprisoned within the natural processes of our human existence. There are many things that we cannot understand which are nevertheless true. You and I cannot understand electricity. I have been told by scientists that strictly speaking, no one really understands electricity. That we can go far enough back so that we can say, we do not understand beyond this, but we accept it. We cannot understand the supernatural but nevertheless, if the evidence is strong enough, we can accept it and believe it and we have seen it in our Lord's life the evidence of it, for the virgin birth is a fitting preface to a life that is crowned by the resurrection from the dead.

If there were others who were resurrected from the dead, I would be inclined to think that our Lord was like one of us. But since we are talking about the only man of whom it can be said that he has been resurrected, then I am willing to believe that one who had such a triumphant conclusion to his life must have had some unusual beginning. And the virgin birth satisfies my mind. Admit a God that mystery is supreme that caused, uncaused all other wonder cease. Nothing is marvelous for him to do. Deny him all his

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mystery, besides. You know what the angel told Mary? She said, "How can this be since I do not know a man?" What did he say? What you need to do is understand biology. No he said, with men, it is impossible. But with God, all things are possible, even a virgin birth. That was Ahaz' great sign. It was the sign to Israel and ultimately the sign came to fruition in the coming of the Lamb of God.

Time is up. Let us close it with a prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the word of God. Oh Father, keep us from the faithlessness.

[Tape ends]