



• Despite Ahaz's disobedience, a few people continue to have faith in God

Ahaz refused to go along a pathway of faith¹¹, so the judgement of God has been pronounced upon Ahaz and Judah¹². However, this does not mean that the picture is one of total devastation without hope for any within the land who continue in faith. Although the land as a whole has turned from God, there are a smaller number within the land who do have faith in the promises of God. They did not associate themselves with Ahaz's unbelief. They would have preferred to walk along the pathway of faith, but they were altogether outnumbered.

11 7:1-17
12 7:18-8:10

• Consistent believers are often outnumbered

The fact is: consistent believers in the promises of God are often outnumbered by those who refuse to take note of what God is saying. Those with true faith in the God of the Bible often find themselves in a minority position. It should not worry us too much. It has often happened before in the story of God's people. But eventually blessing comes to the remnant who stay loyal to God. In the long run the minority do more for God than the majority. There are some outstanding characteristics of 'the remnant'.

God's 'remnant' are a very distinctive people

They are a very distinctive people. Although the nations around Judah are to prepare for war, yet the remnant will maintain their existence and their identity. Verses 9–10 are almost sarcastic. Let the nations do their worst, God's remnant will still survive. God is with them and no one else.

• They will survive

*⁹Raise the war cry, you nations, and be shattered!
Listen, all you distant lands.
Prepare for battle, and be shattered!
Prepare for battle, and be shattered!*

• The promise and presence of the miracle-child guarantees their safety

Though the nations do their worst, their plans will be thwarted because God is with his remnant.

¹⁰Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us.

(i) They do not regard alliances with paganism as having validity or usefulness

The last line uses 'Immanuel' as a statement. The promise and presence of Immanuel, the miracle-child, guarantees the safety of God's people.

¹¹For this is what Yahweh spoke to me with his strong hand upon me, warning me not to follow the way of this people.

• Isaiah and his disciples should not follow the same pathway as others

The remnant are to be different. God speaks to Isaiah with unusual power. He and his disciples are instructed not to follow the pathway through life that everyone else goes along. Isaiah mentions ways in which the remnant are to be different from others. **(i) They do not regard alliances with paganism as having validity or usefulness.** God said:

¹²'Do not call an "alliance" everything that these people call an "alliance"; do not fear what they fear, and do not dread it.'

(ii) They are not to live in fear

Ahaz and the nation were very happy to make an alliance with mighty Assyria. But God says, 'Do not view it in the same way. There can be no real alliance between God's Israel and paganism. Assyria will not be an ally; it will turn out to be a conqueror.'

(ii) The remnant are not to live in fear. While others are afraid and panicky at the political events in Judah, the remnant are to stay cool and calm.

*13 'Yahweh Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy,
he is the one you are to fear,
he is the one you are to dread.'*

• God's people should only fear the thought of displeasing God

The world is full of fears, but the people of God are generally fearless because they fear only one thing – the thought of displeasing their Saviour-God.

*14 'He will be a holy place,
but for both houses of Israel he will be
a stone that causes people to fall over,
and a rock that makes them stumble.
And for the people of Jerusalem he will be
a trap and a snare.
15 Many of them will stumble;
they will fall and be broken,
they will be snared and captured.'*

(iii) They respond differently to the Saviour-God

(iii) The remnant respond differently to the Saviour-God. God is their sanctuary. They enjoy his presence. But at the same time as the remnant enjoy the presence of God, the majority of the two nations of Israel stumble over their Saviour-God. The rock upon which one might build is also a rock over which one might fall. The remnant are different. They enjoy the presence of God, the very God whose purity breaks and ruins the sinner who is not reconciled to him.

(iv) They are a people who are loyal to God's word

(iv) They are a people who are loyal to God's word. Isaiah is putting his words from God into writing. The remnant will be a people who treasure the written documents of Scripture.

*16 'Wrap up the testimony in safety,
and seal up the law among those I have instructed.'*

• They will treasure Scripture

The scrolls of writing are 'wrapped up' by the remnant to keep them safe. They treasure God's word and do not want it changed. The law is 'sealed' to prevent it from being altered.

*17 'I will wait for Yahweh,
who is about to hide his face from the house of Jacob.
I will put my trust in him.'*

• They wait for God to fulfil His Word

The remnant patiently wait for God to be loyal to his word. Anything which departs from God's written word will eventually prove disastrous. It may take time for alternatives to show their falsity but only God's word will stand for ever. No matter how popular or 'charismatic' a viewpoint may be, only that which fits with the written Scriptures will survive the test of God's judgement. When God acts, he acts in harmony with his word. In Isaiah's day God was predicting a period of suffering at the hands of the Assyrians. Isaiah is content to wait. While others rush off to make alliances with Assyrians, Isaiah will wait for God to act.

• Isaiah waits for God to act

• Isaiah offers himself and his disciples as examples to the nation's believers

The prophet offers himself and his disciples as examples to the believers within the nation.

18 'Behold, here am I, and the children Yahweh has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the presence of Yahweh Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion.'

The message that Isaiah preaches from God and the names given to his children are a visible demonstration – signs and symbols – of someone standing in faith in the written word of God.

Isaiah and his friends reject any source of information that uses the occult.

• They reject the occult and call them back to the written Scriptures

¹⁹When people tell you to consult mediums and spiritualists claiming inside knowledge, people who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?

Isaiah calls them back to the written Scriptures.

²⁰To the law and to the testimony!

• Anyone claiming spiritual knowledge to be tested by this principle

All others who claim spiritual knowledge are to be tested by this principle.

If they do not speak according to this word, no light of dawn will ever break upon them.

• Refusal to submit to written Scripture leads to hopeless confusion and ignorance of God

The 'light of dawn' is used as a picture of hope after dark days of hopelessness. Refusal to submit to written Scripture leads to hopeless confusion and ignorance of God. Verses 21–22 describe the hopelessness that will come upon them.

²¹Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land. When they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will use their king and his god in making a curse. ²²Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness.

• Distress leads to cursing, but it does no good

The picture is one of distress and hunger so great that the people involved start cursing others. In their curses, they use the names of Ahaz their king and of the idol he has worshipped. But their cursing does no good.