

## The Sign of Immanuel in Isaiah 7:14

**7:14** "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." (NASB)<sup>1</sup>

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For Christians the sign of Immanuel is of great importance because in the New Testament on the first page of the first book the apostle Matthew (1:23) points to Isaiah 7:14 as being fulfilled in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. So let us have a look at this sign using the following steps.

### 1. The Sign of Immanuel in the Context of Isaiah 7:1 to 25.

**7:1-2:** According to the beginning of this chapter we are in the time of 735-734 B.C. It is the war of the Arameans of Damascus and the Israelites of Samaria against the southern kingdom of Judah with Jerusalem at its centre. This war sent enormous shock waves into the heart of Jerusalem, especially to the royal family descending from David. Perhaps because the enemies wanted to replace the king of David's lineage with a puppet of their own choice (7:6).

**7:3-9:** The prophet Isaiah gets the special task from the Lord to meet king Ahaz to call him to faith taking his own son Shear-jashub with him. Shear-jashub means "a remnant will return", this is explained in 10:21 as: "A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God." The return and repentance of the remnant to God will lead to the salvation of this remnant which is a sign of hope. But at the same time it is **only** the remnant that will be able to return to God, meaning judgment for the unrepentant majority of the nation. So the son of Isaiah was a living reminder of these times of judgment which are the background for any salvation.

Isaiah following the tradition of Deuteronomy 20:1-4 has to call the king to have faith in the living God and not to fear the enemies. The climax of his first speech to the

<sup>1</sup> If not otherwise mentioned the quotations of the Bible are taken from the NASB.

king is 7:9: "If you will not believe, you surely shall not last."

Trust in God is essential for the survival of king Ahaz, Jerusalem and Judah. Because the enemies reject the word of God and want to fulfill their own word and plans they cannot be successful (7:5-7).

There is a certain very important piece of information in the center of 7:7-9:

"7 thus says the Lord GOD:

A "It shall not stand nor shall it come to pass.

B 8 "For the head of Aram is Damascus and the head of Damascus is Rezin

C (now within another 65 years Ephraim will be shattered,  
so that it is no longer a people),

B' 9 and the head of Ephraim is Samaria and the head of Samaria is the son of

A' Remaliah. If you will not believe, you surely shall not last.'"

This small speech of the Lord ("thus says the Lord GOD") is given in the structure of a chiasm (A - B - C - B' - A') with the center statement emphasized that Ephraim will no longer be a visible people in 65 years. The nation that seems so strong in its unison with the Arameans is already about to disappear from history. In the Hebrew there is a pun, a play of words using tail (in 7:4) and head (in 7:8-9) for the seemingly so mighty enemy kings: The head of the head of Aram and the head of the head of Israel are in God's sight only two burning tails about to disappear ("these two stubs of smoldering firebrands" is literally in Hebrew "these two tails of smoldering firebrands"). The head is the leader, the tail is the nobody (Deut 28:13.44).

Because God knows that the enemies are as weak as that king Ahaz should trust in God's power to protect the house of David and Jerusalem (7:9): "If you will not believe, you surely shall not last."

**7:10-25:** To further underline this call to faith God offers king Ahaz to ask for a sign: "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven" (7:11).

It is true that Ahaz does not accept this offer. He uses pious language but his heart is against God: "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" He does not want to get "trapped" in having to trust Isaiah's God when he at the same time planned to call the Assyrians for help selling Judah out into their hands (see 2 Kings 16:5-8). Ahaz was a faithless wicked king. He preferred power politics and idolatry to the trust in God only.

But we can stop here for a second and wonder what kind of sign could Ahaz have asked for in answer to 7:11? God offers him the whole range of the cosmos to choose his sign from. Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, will ask for a sign which involves the sun in heaven (Isaiah 38:7-8.22; 2 Kings 20:8-11). Hezekiah was offered two options as a sign and he choose the more difficult one to have a greater assurance of God's promised salvation. Ahaz could have done the same. The fact that he does not want to ask for a sign seems to annoy God: "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will

be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."

The danger for Jerusalem and Judah was war of catastrophic dimensions. The savior was the Lord, the Lord alone. Much was at stake. Ahaz rejected the request for a sign, but the Lord wanted to give a sign anyway. And he wanted to give this sign to the house of David represented in Ahaz. We must expect the sign to be a miracle, a strong and clear enough miracle to give comfort to those who take the faith perspective of 7:9: "If you will not believe, you surely shall not last." Put in a positive way this means: "All who believe in the Lord, will last by the power of the Lord" (compare 2 Chron 20:20).

So how does the sign of Immanuel fit into this: "Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." If the child is really born by a virgin, that is miracle enough. The Hebrew word translated here with "virgin" is הַעַלְמָה ha-'almah. Besides Isa 7:14 it is used in these verses in the Old Testament: In Genesis 24:43 Abrahams servant is looking out for a virgin bride for Isaak. In Exodus 2:8 it is the older sister of the few months old Moses who is of course also a small child, unmarried and a virgin still. See the other verses: Psalms 68:25: "The singers went on, the musicians after them, In the midst of the maidens beating tambourines." Proverbs 30:18-19 "18 There are three things which are too wonderful for me, Four which I do not understand: 19 The way of an eagle in the sky, The way of a serpent on a rock, The way of a ship in the middle of the sea, And the way of a man with a maid." Song of Solomon 1:3: "Your oils have a pleasing fragrance, Your name is like purified oil; Therefore the maidens love you." Song of Solomon 6:8: "There are sixty queens and eighty concubines, And maidens without number." None of the seven texts presents a woman which is clearly married and no longer a virgin. Those who translate ha-'almah with "a young woman" have no clear text to present that ha-'almah was used of a married young woman. The standard Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, has used παρθενος parthenos denoting a virgin and Matthew has used this translation.

The Name of the child is "Immanuel" which means "God is with us". This points to the faith of the mother who will be confident that God has accepted his people again and grants them a time of salvation titled "God is with us".

But if we follow this idea of the Jewish translators and Matthew 1:23, what does the sign of an Immanuel who is born by a faithful virgin mother tell Ahaz in the year 735-734 B.C.? This has to be taken out of the following verses 7:15-25. Let us start with

**7:15-16:** "He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken." The pressing problem of the time was the war of Aram and Ephraim against Judah. These verses tell us something about the first part of the childhood of Immanuel. Depending on what we understand "evil and good" to be pointing to this age will differ. If it is about "detrimental or useful food" then it is a very young age, if it is about moral discernment then it will be up to the teenage years. Before Immanuel will reach this

age Aram and Israel will be forsaken. So the information we get out of this is that the next big thing to happen is the destruction of Aram and Israel. With regard to Israel the context points to a 65 years time frame (see 7:8). If we combine 7:8 and 7:15-16 we learn that before Immanuel reaches the presented age the northern kingdom of Israel will be forsaken, this means that Immanuel will not reach this age within the next 65 years. This means for king Ahaz that he will not see the day of the birth of Immanuel. It is a prophecy teaching him that the time of salvation will start after his time when the mother will name her son "Immanuel", "God is (again) with us". The further explanation of Isaiah fits to this:

**7:17-20:** "The LORD will bring on you, on your people, and on your father's house such days as have never come since the day that Ephraim separated from Judah, the king of Assyria. 18 In that day the LORD will whistle for the fly that is in the remotest part of the rivers of Egypt and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. 19 They will all come and settle on the steep ravines, on the ledges of the cliffs, on all the thorn bushes and on all the watering places. 20 In that day the Lord will shave with a razor, hired from regions beyond the Euphrates (that is, with the king of Assyria), the head and the hair of the legs; and it will also remove the beard. " Because king Ahaz was an unbeliever and his people as well they will have a tough time now. The special punishment for Ahaz lies in the fact that God will use exactly that Ahaz relies upon. The Assyrians will shave Judah and leave nothing of worth behind. To remove the beard of a man is to dishonor him (2 Sam 10:4-5). Using the Assyrians God will take the glory away from Judah and Jerusalem. Things are going to happen now which can only be paralleled by the disastrous falling away of Northern Israel from the house of David. But God will not only use the one superpower Assur but also the other old power Egypt to humble Judah and Jerusalem. The results of these drastic measures are visible in

**7:21-25:** "21 Now in that day a man may keep alive a heifer and a pair of sheep; 22 and because of the abundance of the milk produced he will eat curds, for everyone that is left within the land will eat curds and honey. 23 And it will come about in that day, that every place where there used to be a thousand vines, valued at a thousand shekels of silver, will become briars and thorns. 24 People will come there with bows and arrows because all the land will be briars and thorns. 25 As for all the hills which used to be cultivated with the hoe, you will not go there for fear of briars and thorns; but they will become a place for pasturing oxen and for sheep to trample."

Here we learn that not only Israel and Aram will be devastated but Judah as well. Those who survive the onslaught will eat "curds and honey", the same nourishment of Immanuel in 7:15-16. This extra piece of information shows us where Immanuel belongs to: He is part of the holy remnant, of the people who will live in Judah after it has been devastated. Compare the name Shear-Jashub of the son accompanying Isaiah in chapter 7 and see 6:13: "Yet there will be a tenth portion in it, And it will again be subject to burning, Like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump."

If we sum up what God tells Ahaz through Isaiah in this sign, it is a double message: one part is salvation, one part is judgment. The salvation lies in God's being with his people, therefore Aram and Israel will not destroy Judah or the line of David, but God will let them be destroyed. There will be a time of salvation related to the birth of Immanuel and his being a sign. But for Ahaz the weight of the sign of Immanuel is more on the judgment side: Immanuel will be born after the judgment has reached Judah through Assur and Egypt. The immediate future will weaken Judah to an enormous extent and there seems no room for any glory of the house of David in the verses 7:17-25. At least for some time the glory of the house of David will be gone. The negative side of 7:9 hits Ahaz and his house hard: "If you will not believe, you surely shall not last."

## 2. The Sign of Immanuel in the Context of Isaiah 2:1 to 13:1.

A 2,1-5 The law of the Lord will go forth from the exalted Zion, convert all nations and bring peace to the world.

B 2,6-22 The day of the Lord will also target his own people. Man will be made low, and the Lord alone will be exalted.

C 3,1-4,6 In his judgment on Jerusalem and Judah the Lord will remove from men (3,1) and women (3,18) what is precious to them. In his grace he will give a glorious future to the holy remnant in Zion.

D 5,1-7 Having waited in vain for the fruits of justice and righteousness the Lord removes (5,5) his protection from the unfruitful vineyard Israel and Judah, so that it will be destroyed in judgment.

E 5,8-25 Six times (5,8.11.18.20.21.22) "woe" to God's people, his hand is raised to punish them.

F 5,26-30 God uses a distant nation as a means of judgment against his own people, who will be submerged in darkness.

G 6,1-13 Isaiah sees the king of the world, the holy Lord Almighty in his palace temple. He realizes his own sinfulness and impurity, is cleansed, called and sent on his mission.

H 7,1-9 While Syria and Ephraim try to conquer Jerusalem Isaiah calls Ahaz to trust in the Lord. Isaiah's son Shear-Jashub serves as a sign. "If you do not stand firm in the faith, you will not stand at all."

I 7,10-25 Ahaz chooses not to believe and not to ask for a sign as commanded. God gives him the sign of Immanuel. God will use Egypt and Assyria to punish the house of David and the people of Judah.

H' 8,1-4 Isaiah's son "Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz" is a sign for the impending judgment of Syria (Damascus) and Ephraim (Samaria).

I' 8,5-10 Assyria and the nations will flood Judah, but they will not be able to erase it because of Immanuel.

G' 8,11-18 In his calling Isaiah was warned not to follow the way of "this people". The Lord will be a sanctuary for those who regard him as holy, but for both houses of Israel he will be a stumbling stone and trap. Isaiah and his children serve as a sign to illustrate this truth.

F' 8,19-22 As long as this people does not seek the light of God's law, but consults mediums and spiritists, it will remain in the darkness of judgment.

D' 9,1-6 The Son on David's throne is the light overcoming the darkness. He will establish a kingdom of peace through righteousness and justice.

E' 9,7-10,4 The Lord judges Ephraim with his hand raised (9,12.17.21; 10,4). Woe to them (10,1)!

C' 10,5-34 Woe (10,5) to the proud Assyrian, the rod of God's anger. The yoke of Assyria will be removed (10,27) from the repentant holy remnant of God's people in Zion.

A' 11,1-12,6 The Messiah will rule and judge all nations from Zion creating an everlasting worldwide kingdom of peace. God's people are gathered in a second exodus from all the world and sing the song of salvation in Zion.

B' 13,1-14,23 Oracle (massa') concerning Babylon: The day of the Lord over Babylon results in the exodus of Israel to go home and come into power.



Now they can sing a song about the end of the tyrant of Babylon.

As can be seen from the above outline<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 7 (together with 8:1-10) can be understood as the center piece the whole chiasmic section 2:1 to 14:23. This part is enveloped by the two calling narratives of Isaiah in 6:1-13 and 8:11-18 in the first person singular. The whole section 6:1-8:18 is a narrative block which is the center of this part of the book of Isaiah (2:1-14:23) as 36-39 the other big narrative text block is the center of Isaiah 13:1 to 66:24.

These two important narrative sections relate to each other in many ways. And they both root the whole book of Isaiah and his message deep in his own times. All the prophecies which have been fulfilled in his own life time ("the earlier things") put a divine seal on his prophecy so that the reader knows that the "new things" will be fulfilled as well even if they relate to the redemption from Babylon or from the bondage of sin or to the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth in the distant future of the new world.

So what can we learn from the context in 2:1 to 14:23 about a possible understanding of Isaiah 7?

1. The first thing is we see the broader picture. Both in 2:1-5 and 11:1-12:6 we are informed of God's ultimate plan for human history: There will be a never-ending reign of peace ushered in and sustained by God's word (2:3) and God's Messiah (11:1-2.10).

2. The calling of Isaiah in 6:1-13 sets the stage for the understanding of the whole book. The following we can apply from 6:1-13 on 7:1ff: As Isaiah was called to preach but the people would not understand and believe in chapter 6 so it happens in chapter 7 that Ahaz to whom is preached does not understand and does not repent. Yes, Isaiah's words are even expected to have a heart hardening effect (6:9-10). So one reason for the enigmatic language in Isaiah 7 is that this sermon was meant to confuse those who would not trust the Lord, in this case Ahaz and even harden them.

3. A further piece of information from 6:1-13 is the outlook for the future we can gather from the verses

**6:11-13:** ""11 Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered, "Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, Houses are without people And the land is utterly desolate, 12 The LORD has removed men far away, And the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. 13 Yet there will be a tenth portion in it, And it will again be subject to burning, Like a terebinth or an oak Whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump." ""

Isaiah's outlook for the future is twofold: First there will be a time of judgments. The judgment coming like waves one after the other. Then there will be a time of salvation where the "holy seed" will change the whole world (2:1-5; 11:1-12:6). Because the picture of the "holy seed" gives us a small start of the time of salvation which has to grow (like a seed grows and bears fruit) we must reckon with an overlapping of the times of judgment and the times of salvation. It is the same idea which is presented by the name of Isaiah's son "Shear-Jashub", only a remnant will

<sup>2</sup> Taken from <http://www.lanz.li/engot/isaengstructure.pdf>.

return to God. The fact that there is a remnant means that there is salvation and grace in judgment (see 1:8-9).

4. Another important piece of information is of course Isaiah's own name and experience in 6:1-13. The meaning of Isaiah is "The Lord saves". This is also a good title for 6:1-13, when we think of Isaiah's life and service. Seeing the Lord as almighty king he recognized his own sins and felt his perdition coming but he was saved by something taken from the altar which is the place of atonement administered to him by a heavenly priest, a Saraph. Because Isaiah and his children all have names of significance<sup>3</sup>, Isaiah's salvation reflects Israel's coming salvation. As Isaiah was changed from being a man with unclean lips to the Evangelist of the Old Testament, so Jerusalem will be changed from being like Sodom and Gomorrah (1:8-10) to become the Evangelist of the world (2:1-5). When we look into the book of Isaiah to have a parallel to Isaiah's experience in 6:1-13 for the whole nation, the sections which offer themselves are 33:14-24 and 53:1-11.

5. In the other text of Isaiah's calling (8,11-18) he was warned not to follow the way of "this people". The Lord will be a sanctuary for those who regard him as holy, but for both houses of Israel he will be a stumbling stone and trap. Isaiah and his children serve as a sign to illustrate this truth. This text also puts an emphasis on God's revelation (8:16-20). It seems that the hardening of the hearts in 6:9-10 is related to the fact that the people reject the revelation of God in 8:19-20.<sup>4</sup> Those can return and repent who accept the word of God like Isaiah and other disciples of God<sup>5</sup>. This agrees with 7:9: "If you will not believe, you surely shall not last." There is a remnant of those who believe and who will last, having been left over by God's grace (1:8-9; Rom 9:29; 11:4-6).

6. Within chapter 8 there is some more useful and very important information about the Immanuel. After the birth of Isaiah's son (see 8:1-4)<sup>6</sup> Maher-shalal-hash-baz whose name points to the immediate plundering of the two enemy kingdoms of this war we are told that the Assyrians will come like a destructive flood (8:5-10). There is only one reason that the waters of this flood will only reach the "neck" of Judah and not go above the head drowning Judah. This reason is a person: Immanuel! **8:8-10:** "8 Then it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass through, It will reach even to the neck; And the spread of its wings will fill the breadth of your land, **O Immanuel.** 9 Be broken, O peoples, and be shattered; And give ear, all remote places of the earth. Gird yourselves, yet be shattered; Gird yourselves, yet be shattered. 10 Devise a plan, but it will be thwarted; State a proposal, but it will not stand, **For God is with us.**"

3 Isa 8:18 Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.

4 8:19 When they say to you, "Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter," should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living? 20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.

5 8:16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.

6 8:3 So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz; 4 for before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."



The Hebrew words "immanu el" are three times used in Isaiah (in 7:14; 8:8 and 8:10). The bold phrase in 8:10 is also "immanu el" in Hebrew. It is ambiguous. You could either translate it with "for God is with us" (like above) or with "because of Immanuel". In both cases it points to the child. The Assyrians (and all nations with them and after them to this very day) can not destroy Judah totally, because it will have a future, must have a future, because of this child Immanuel! The land is called the land of Immanuel in 8:8, because this child is the lord of the country the coming king of the house of David. Isaiah 8:8-10 is to be compared to Isaiah 37:35 "For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake." In both places God will save Judah from total destruction through the Assyrians because of his promises to David (2 Sam 7) which are culminating in the advent of "Immanuel".

7. As the enigmatic child of 7:14 gains more profile in 8:8-10 as the reason for Judah's protection from utter destruction, so this development goes still further on in **9:1-7**: The areas of Zebulun and Naphtali which being border areas first felt the power of the surrounding nations and of attacking Assur which incorporated parts of them first in his kingdom.<sup>7</sup> As their humiliation was a god-sent punishment, so their future will be a special grace (9:1-2) "But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them." The great light that will finish the darkness is pointed out with three "ki" (כִּי) in Hebrew, at the start of 9:4 and 9:5 and 9:6. The last "ki" (for, because) gives the ultimate reason for the end of the night and the beginning of the day of salvation: **9:6-7**: "6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this." When 7:14 tells us about the miraculous birth of the Immanuel and 8:8-10 proclaim him the warranty of the future of Judah against all attacks of the nations, here in 9:6-7 we learn about the divine power of the Messiah. It is one name ("His name") which presents 8 words in 4 couples telling us about the future qualities of this savior king who is the light that finishes the darkness. The name "Mighty God" (El Gibbor) is taken up in Isaiah 10:21 "A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God" (El Gibbor). The two words El and Gibbor put thus together are only used in this way twice in the Old Testament. In 9:6 it is part of the name of the Messiah, in 10:21 it is the name of God to whom Israel's remnant will return in repentance. Both verses combined like this point to the divinity of the coming Messiah.

<sup>7</sup> 2 Kings 15:29 In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria. 30 And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck him and put him to death and became king in his place, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah.

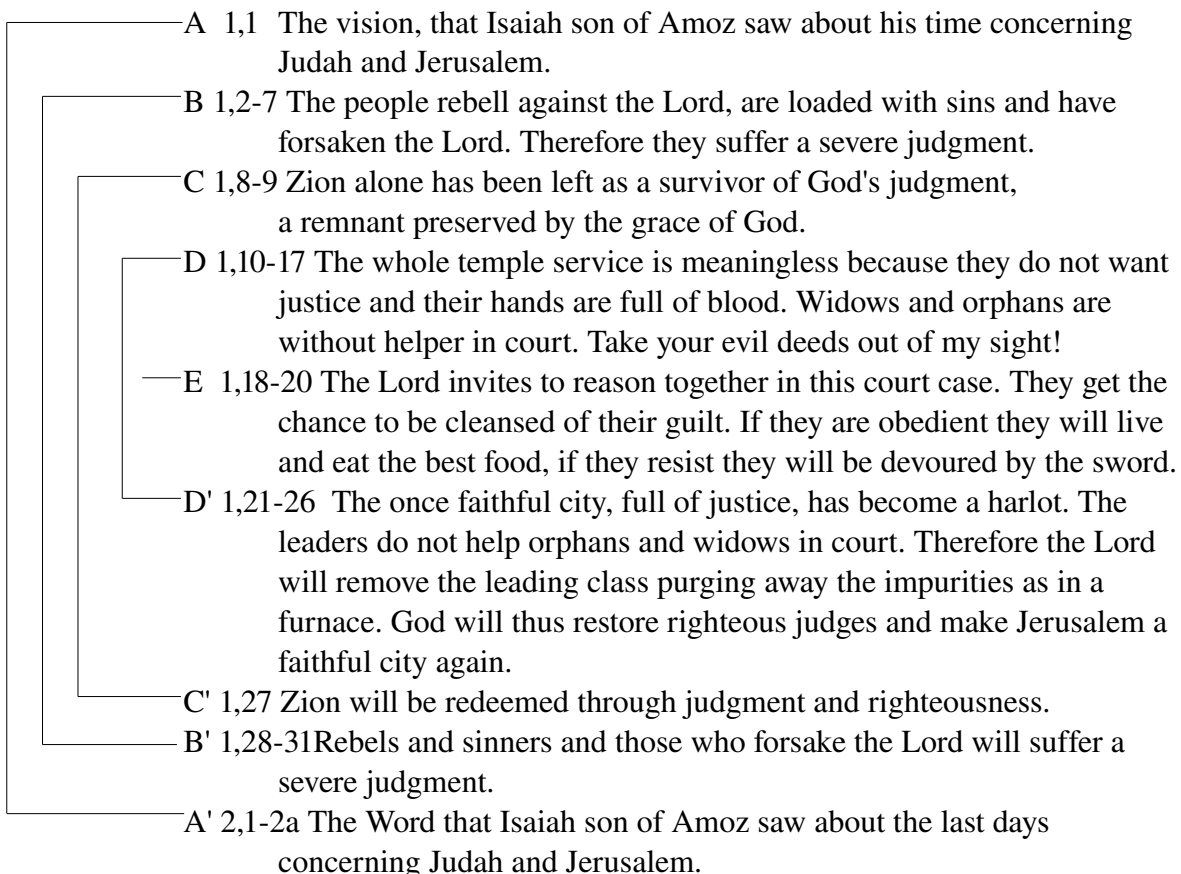
8. The list of messianic savior passages in Isaiah 2-12 continues with Isa **11:1-10**. It starts with 11:1-2 "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD." This continues the series 7:14 Immanuel is still in his mother's womb, then born and given his name. In 9:6-7 he is already on the throne and in 11:1-10 he is acting as righteous Spirit empowered king and judge changing the world to an ocean of peace and knowledge of God (11:9).

### 3. The Sign of Immanuel in the Context of Isaiah 1 to 66.

When we look at the structure of the book of Isaiah the superscriptions in 1,1; 2,1 and 13,1 and the narrative texts in Is 6-8 and 36-39 are essential. Following these superscriptions you can get three parts: 1. Chapter 1; 2. Chapter 2-12 and 3. chapter 13-66. The narrative texts of Is 6-8 stand in the structural center of the second main section 2-12 and the narrative texts of 36-39 stand in the structural center of 13-66.

#### **1. The first part (1:1-2:2) introduces the main subjects of the book.**

Is 1,1-2,2: The rebellious Jerusalem of today is transformed through God's judgments to become the future world-center of the proclamation of the Word of God.



There is an enormous tension between the wicked Jerusalem in chapter one and the

world changing evangelist Jerusalem in chapter 2:1-5. How will God bring this change about that a Sodom and Gomorrah like city will be the center of the true worship of God in all the world? This question is partially answered in Isa 2:1 to 14:23 by pointing towards two great gifts of God: The word of God which will go forth from Jerusalem to all nations (2:3) and the Spirit empowered Messiah of God from the house of David (9:6-7 and 11:1-10). Another means of changing the world is the "day of the Lord" over Israel (2:6-22) and over Babel (representing as the key gentile superpower all other gentiles as well; 13:1-14:23).<sup>8</sup>

Let us look at the center statement of 1:1 to 2:2 which we find in 1:18-20: The Lord invites to reason together in this court case. They get the chance to be cleansed of their guilt. If they are obedient they will live and eat the best food, if they resist they will be devoured by the sword. This presents us the key question of the change of heart, the question of being cleansed from all the sins, even from blood guilt (see 1:15).<sup>9</sup> How will this be possible? It surely will not be through such animal sacrifices which are criticized in Isa 1:11-14.

## ***2. We have already seen in the second part (2:1-14:23;***

see above) that there is a hint of the way of salvation in Isaiah's own experience in 6:6-7.<sup>10</sup> But this is a vision and a highly symbolic happening. If we would search within the book of Isaiah how his sins have been forgiven, we would come across the statement in 53:5-6. Within Isaiah 1-12 the savior Immanuel (7:14; 8:8.10) or the Messiah of the house of David (9:6-7; 11:1-2) is more of a kingly figure who brings righteousness by the way of teaching and righteous judgment.

This more kingly savior figure is supplemented by the figure of the servant of the Lord

## ***3. in the third part of the book (13:1-66:24).***

From Babylon to Zion: The way of Israel and the nations into the kingdom of God through the servants of the Lord.

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<sup>8</sup> These two passages about the "day of the Lord" and others in Isaiah have elements both of inner-historical divine judgment and of eschatological divine judgment.

<sup>9</sup> 1:15 "So when you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide My eyes from you; Yes, even though you multiply prayers, I will not listen. Your hands are covered with blood.

<sup>10</sup> 6:6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. 7 He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

- A 13-27 From the kingdom of Babylon to the kingdom of the Lord in Zion.
  1. 13-23 Ten prophetic oracles (massa') about Babylon, the nations and Israel.
  2. 24-27 When the earth passes away on the day of the Lord there will be only a few men left. The Lord will be king in Zion and prepare a feast of salvation there for all nations: Death will be destroyed. The Exiles return from Egypt and Assyria.
- B 28-35 From "Woe to Israel" to the joy of the redeemed coming home.
  1. 28-33 Six woes to Israel, Judah and the destroyer.
  2. 34-35 The day of the Lord brings judgment for Edom and the nations. Heaven will pass away. The coming of the Lord brings eternal salvation for his people coming home.
- C 36-39 The Lord saves Jerusalem and the faithful Hezekiah from Assur and predicts to the healed Hezekiah that his sons will be exiled to Babylon.
- A' 40,1-52,12 From the kingdom of Babylon to the kingdom of the Lord in Zion.
- B' 52,13-66,24 From the redemption of the lost Israel through the servant of the Lord to the joy of the redeemed coming home.

The sections about the servant of the Lord (42:1ff; 49:1ff; 50:4ff and 52:13-53:12) within Isa 13-66 are especially interesting for our subject because many statements of the kingly savior figure have parallels in the sections of this servant of the Lord:

1. The Messiah is light to people in darkness (9:1-7), so is the servant (42:6-7; 49:6).
2. The Messiah is empowered by the Spirit of God (11:1-2), so is the servant (42:1).
3. The Messiah is compared to a plant (11:1-2), so is the servant (53:2).
4. The Messiah will convert the world (11:1-10), so will the servant (42:1-4; 49:6; 52:13-15; 53:10-12).

#### **4. The Sign of Immanuel in the Context of the Old Testament.**

Here the contemporary colleague of Isaiah Micah is of special interest. He speaks of a woman in chapter

**5:2-5:** "2 But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity. 3 Therefore He will give them up until the time When she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren Will return to the sons of Israel. 4 And He will arise and shepherd His flock In the strength of the LORD, In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, Because at that time He will be great To the ends of the earth. 5 This One will be our peace..."

Both Isaiah and Micah were waiting for the special pregnant woman to give birth to the child which would change the course of history. In Micah 5:2-5 it is clear that she is the mother of the Messiah from the house of David. The special idea in Micah is

that he will not be born in Jerusalem, where you would expect the king and his prince to be but in Bethlehem which presupposes the same loss of the throne which is also presupposed in 9:6-7 in the picture of the light after the darkness and in Isa 11:1-2 in the picture of the "shoot": "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit." First the tree of the family of David is cut down, then this shoot will grow again. It is a picture of salvation after judgment. The Messiah also will have to start from zero, not in a palace in Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem. There are of course other messianic prophecies in the Old Testament but the one from Micah seems to be closest to Isaiah 7:14-16.

## 5. The Sign of Immanuel in the Context of the whole Bible.

Coming from Isaiah 7:14 in the Old Testament the last context within the Bible is in the New Testament and here it is especially Matthew 1:23 that is linked to Isa 7:14.

Let us have a look at

**Matthew 1:18-25:** "18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. 19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. 20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.' 22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 'BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,' which translated means, 'GOD WITH US.' 24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, 25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus."

In Isaiah 7 the message related to the child of promise is "God is with us", this meant at that time that God will save Jerusalem from Aram and Ephraim because of his promise to David. He can use Assur as a tool of punishment, but because of David he will still hold a future for the house of David and the coming Messiah. In Isaiah God's being with his remnant and so salvation is related to survival in the floods of war (8:8-10) and also to forgiveness of sins (6:1-13) and salvation from spiritual darkness (6:1-13; 42:6-7; 49:6; 53:5-6). In Matthew it is especially salvation from sin and spiritual darkness (Matthew 1:21), but to achieve this God saves the baby Jesus also from the sword of King Herod (Matth 2). Matthew explains that the birth of Jesus from the virgin Mary fulfills Isa 7:14 and that his name "Jesus" which means "the Lord saves" is the spiritual fulfillment of the "Immanuel"-name in Isaiah 7:14. This fits very well, because God's being with us is a being with us to save us from our enemies: sin, death and the spiritual darkness.