

The Book of Immanuel-Chapters 7-12

We now begin the consideration of one of the most interesting and important sections of the entire book of Isaiah. Here the prophet gives us many clear and wonderful glimpses of the great future connected with our Lord Jesus Christ. Yet here it is particularly necessary to be aware of the historical background, if we are to understand the chapters as a whole and not merely to look at isolated verses.

Isaiah 7

For correct interpretation of these chapters it is vital to keep in mind that Isaiah is dealing with a wicked and hostile king, Ahaz, who reveals himself in chapter 7 as not at all interested in the Word of God. Later Ahaz went so far as to displace the brazen altar of the temple and substitute for it one built on the model of a heathen altar at Damascus (2 Kings 16:9-15). The first two verses of the Book of Immanuel (Isa. 7:1-2) sketch the historical background of the section quite briefly. Further details are given in 2 Kings 16 and in 2 Chronicles 28.

As the chapter begins, we find the people of Judah tremendously frightened. A great crisis faced them. Directly to the north of Judah was Israel, a country made up of people of the same blood as those of Judah, but politically separated from them now for over two hundred years. Israel, which was also called Ephraim, using the name of its most powerful tribe, was much larger than Judah. It contained ten tribes, while the southern kingdom had only two. Israel and Judah had fought at various times during the previous two centuries and sometimes Israel won. Now Judah was menaced by an attack not only by Ephraim, but by another nation as well. Beyond Israel to the northeast was the country we now call Syria, which in those days was called Aram. This country was much larger and stronger than Israel. There had often been wars between Syria and Israel, and Syria had usually proven the stronger of the two. When these two nations joined together to attack Judah, it looked as if little hope remained for Judah. They were intending not merely to take a little territory from Judah, but actually to end the Davidic kingship