

as a prophet of God and it might injure their morale if open hostility toward the prophet were publicly displayed. At the same time he was anxious that Isaiah confine his activities to strengthening the morale of the people without interfering with the king.

That this was the attitude of Ahaz is made clear by what follows. The Lord caused Isaiah to give a further message to Ahaz, in addition to that which he had previously been directed to give at this time. Evidently, right there on the spot, the Lord added to the message the following: "Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above" (verse 11). What a tremendous offer to Ahaz. Ahaz, you seem unwilling to believe this promise. You are all excited about the danger, you don't think God is going to protect you. Well, ask God for a sign! God is willing to prove that He is able to protect His city.

The next verse looks at first as though Ahaz were pious. Actually, however, in view of the rebuke that Isaiah immediately proceeds to give to Ahaz, it is evident that the statement is not pious, but is really a wicked evasion. Ahaz says: "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD." What he means is: "I am not interested in spending time over your alleged signs. I want to move on with this important defense work."

Interpreters often make the mistake of considering what follows as a message of comfort to Ahaz from God. Actually, the beginning of the statement (v. 13) makes it perfectly clear that Isaiah is not interested here in giving comfort to Ahaz. He has already given Ahaz a promise of comfort, and Ahaz has rejected it. He is now interested in giving a rebuke to Ahaz. What there is of comfort in what follows is intended for the people, not for Ahaz. The godly among the people recognize, as Isaiah does, that Ahaz is an utterly unworthy scion of the house of David. Instead of following God and trusting in the wonderful promises that Isaiah has given that God will protect His city, Ahaz is looking to unworthy human means for defense. The people do not know about the secret scheme into which Ahaz has entered, but God knows all about it and proceeds to rebuke Ahaz, and to declare that eventually God is going to replace Ahaz on the throne of David by One who will be a true servant of God, as David