

God Promises
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Isaiah 7:7-17

Why do we study history? How does it help us? We'll circle back to this topic.

Do we believe God will keep His promises? I don't mean believe in the intellectual sense or to say we believe because that's the "right" response. Do we believe it enough to count on it when we're faced with an incredible challenge? Do we trust God enough to bet our very lives on what He has promised?

The people of Judah were faced with a huge threat and their king, Ahaz was confronted with the question: Do you trust God to keep His promises? Ahaz failed miserably but you and I can learn from his mistake.

Big Idea: From time to time we all face something too big to climb, too heavy to move, or too strong to defeat. That's when our faith in God is put to the test. If we really believe God is sovereign, we will TRUST Him to keep His promises.

These were the days of the "divided kingdoms" of Israel (in the north) and Judah (in the south.) Israel had split into two kingdoms when Solomon's son Rehoboam came to the throne and the people of Israel refused to follow him as leader. At this point the king in Judah was Ahaz. He was an foolish and evil king who "committed such abominable Canaanite practices as sacrificing his son and worshiping [false idols] at high places (2 Kings 16:1–4)."¹

Warren Wiersbe sets the stage for us: *"These were perilous days for the nation of Judah. Assyria was growing stronger and threatening the smaller nations whose security depended on a very delicate political balance. Syria and Ephraim (the Northern Kingdom) tried to pressure Judah into an alliance against Assyria, but Ahaz refused to join them. Why? Because he had secretly made a treaty with Assyria!*

(2 Kings 16:5–9) The king was playing “power politics” instead of trusting in the power of God.”ⁱⁱ

- God sent the prophet Isaiah with a message for King Ahaz”
- Verse 4: ⁴ Tell him to stop worrying. Tell him he doesn’t need to fear the fierce anger of those two burned-out embers, King Rezin of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah [King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel].ⁱⁱⁱ
- Tell Ahaz “this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “This invasion will never happen; it will never take place...”^{iv}
- That was a promise from the Lord, and the Lord added in verse nine: “Unless your faith is firm, I cannot make you stand firm.”^v
- Those were challenging words for Ahaz and they apply to us today.
- Next the Lord did something interesting. He invited Ahaz to ask for a miraculous sign that would convince him God would keep that promise.
- The Lord said, “Ask for any miraculous sign you want, as high as the heavens or as deep as “the place of the dead” and I’ll do it to prove my promise is trustworthy. What an opportunity for miraculous confirmation!
- Verse 12 says, “The king refused...” Ahaz not only refused God’s offer, he suddenly became very sanctimonious: “It wouldn’t be right to test God!”
- Now that sounded pretty righteous! We shouldn’t “test” God, right?
- Ahaz wasn’t so pious. Some people talk a good game of how much they trust God’s promises but in their hearts they’ve made their own plans.
- Ahaz didn’t trust in God, his trust was in his military alliance with Assyria.
- How many times do we say we trust God and then start working on our backup plans because we don’t really believe He will keep His promises?
- Lately I’ve been meditating on Psalm 46:10, “Be still, and know that I am God.”^{vi} “Be still” means “cease striving.” Stop trying to fix things yourself. Stop coming up with backup plans. Remember, I’m God and I’m at work.

- Isaiah said to Ahaz, you won't ask for a sign but God has one anyway:

¹⁴ All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us'). ¹⁵ By the time this child is old enough to choose what is right and reject what is wrong, he will be eating yogurt and honey. ¹⁶ For before the child is that old, the lands of the two kings you fear so much will both be deserted.^{vii}

- A virgin gives birth to a son and calls him Immanuel? We know that story!
- Scholars debate the interpretation and there are three main theories:
 - (1) The boy...was conceived shortly after Isaiah spoke this message. A young woman, a virgin, married and then had a baby. Before he would be old enough to tell the difference between good and evil the northern Aram-Israel alliance would be destroyed.^{viii} Some say it was Isaiah's child by his second wife.
 - (2) A second view sees the predicted birth as exclusively messianic and the virgin as Mary, Jesus' mother.^{ix} Matthew quoted Is. 7:14.
 - (3) A third view, a combination of the first two...^x
- Here's the application for Ahaz: By the time a child is carried, born, and reaches two years old, these attacking kingdoms will be out of business.
- Basically, the Lord was saying, "Ahaz, I'm not saying this problem will go away tomorrow, but if you'll "be still and know that I'm God" it will go away and I will protect my people in the meantime."
- This can also be our problem when it comes to trusting God. We want the problem to be instantly resolved but that may not be God's plan or timing.
- Thinking about that name, Immanuel – God with us. It not only reminds us of Jesus' incarnation on earth, it reminds us He is with us now and always.

- God never promised to remove every problem but He promised to be with us through every problem. Look at this great promise in Isaiah 43:2:

² When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.

- Immanuel means God with us and He is STILL with us!
- Ahaz refused to listen because he had his own plan. He literally took the treasures out of the temple to pay off the Assyrians for protection. How did that work out? Isaiah told him how that would go in verses 17-20:

¹⁷ “Then the LORD will bring things on you, your nation, and your family unlike anything since Israel broke away from Judah. He will bring the king of Assyria upon you!” ¹⁸ In that day the LORD will whistle for the army of southern Egypt and for the army of Assyria. They will swarm around you like flies and bees. ¹⁹ They will come in vast hordes and settle in the fertile areas and also in the desolate valleys, caves, and thorny places. ²⁰ In that day the Lord will hire a “razor” from beyond the Euphrates River—the king of Assyria—and use it to shave off everything: your land, your crops, and your people.

- Assyria would ravage Judah and destroy most of her cities. So much for Ahaz’s plan. As our lesson writer put it: *“Ahaz had essentially invited a jaguar into his house to protect him from some wild dogs outside.”*^{xi}

So what’s the Takeaway?

- How does this apply to you and me today?
- From time to time we all face something too big to climb, too heavy to move, or too strong to defeat. That’s when our faith in God is put to the test. If we really believe God is sovereign, we will TRUST His promises.
- Ahaz refused to trust God and instead trusted an evil military alliance.
- God even invited Ahaz to ask for a sign, but Ahaz didn’t want to hear it.

- I've never believed in demanding signs from God, but I have seen Him confirm things to me. I've never heard an audible voice from Heaven but I have heard His voice through His word and the wisdom of His people.
- That said, I do believe we have access to confirmation that God keeps His promises to His people.
- We talked about how studying history can benefit civilizations. Let's apply that to trusting God and watching Him work in our lives.
- We have two "spiritual" history books: God's word and our experience.
- My Bible tells me what God has done in the past for others.
- My experience reminds me what He has done in the past for me.
- My Bible tells me what God has promised me in the future.
- My experience reminds me how He has kept those promises in the past.
- My Bible tells me He will do it again and again if I will only trust and obey.
- My experience assures me that trust and obey works every time.
- Charles Spurgeon compared trusting God's promises to a checkbook. Listen to these words from his devotional: "Faith's Checkbook."

A PROMISE from God may...be compared to a check payable to order. It is given to the believer with the view of bestowing upon him some good thing. It is not meant that he should read it over comfortably, and then have done with it. No, he is to treat the promise as a reality, as a man treats a check.

He is to take the promise, and endorse it with his own name by personally receiving it as true. He is by faith to accept it as his own. He sets to his seal that God is true and true as to this particular word of promise. He goes further, and believes that he has the blessing in having the sure promise of it, and therefore he puts his name to it to testify to the receipt of the blessing.

This done, he must believingly present the promise to the Lord, as a man presents a check at the counter of the bank. He must plead it by prayer, expecting to have it fulfilled. If he has come to heaven's bank

at the right date, he will receive the promised amount at once. If the date should happen to be further on, he must patiently wait till its arrival; but meanwhile he may count the promise as money, for the bank is sure to pay when the due time arrives.

Some fail to place the endorsement of faith upon the check (of promise), and so they get nothing; and others are slack in presenting it, and these also receive nothing. This is not the fault of the promise, but of those who do not act with it in a common-sense, business-like manner. God has given no pledge which He will not redeem, and encouraged no hope which He will not fulfill.^{xii}

- God said to Ahaz, “Unless your faith is firm, I cannot make you stand firm.”
- How firm is our faith in believing God will keep His promises?
- Another great verse in Isaiah tells us: ³ You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.- Isaiah 26:3 (ESV)
- We can’t have peace in the midst of trials unless we trust in Him.
- Will we take Spurgeon’s advice and consider God’s promises as a check we can take to the bank, or will we file them away as Sunday School talk?
- If we really believe God is sovereign, we will TRUST Him to keep His promises, especially when we’re facing a giant problem.

ⁱ Achtemeier, P. J., Harper & Row and Society of Biblical Literature. (1985). In [Where Be We Wicked? \(Be Comforted\)](#) (pp. 35-32). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

ⁱⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Is 7:4). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{iv} Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Is 7:7). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^v Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Is 7:9). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{vi} [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ps 46:10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^{vii} Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Is 7:14–17). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{viii} Martin, J. A. (1985). [Isaiah](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1048). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{ix} Martin, J. A. (1985). [Isaiah](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1048). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^x Martin, J. A. (1985). [Isaiah](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1048). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{xi} Explore the Bible Leader Guide – Lifeway 2020

^{xii} https://www.preceptaustin.org/faiths_checkbook_by_c_h_spurgeon