

The Immanuel prophecy about Isaiah 7:1-9:7 is one of the most important passages in the Old Testament, which has stayed rather timeless. Furthermore, as it has a historical and literary context, its message of God conveys judgment, deliverance, as well as hope. This meeting of the prophet Isaiah and King Ahaz during a crisis in the nation gives religious understanding that would not only elaborate on the particular political situation in the institutions of that era, the eighth century in the Judah reign, but would lead to the ultimate revelation of Jesus Christ presented in the New Testament. It is important to have an understanding of the historical background, the theological meaning of the Immanuel sign, who the children are in the text, and whether this prophecy has a bearing on the modern believer.

Emmanuel Sign Historical Background.

Background Isaiah 7:1-9:7

The historical background of the Syro-Ephraimite crisis, which occurred in the 735-732 B. C formed the basis of the book of Isaiah 7:1-9:7. The kingdoms of Aram, and Israel had allied to attack the impending Assyrian Empire in this time, with Tiglath-Pileser III l. To join their anti-Assyrian alliance King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel would have liked to persuade King Ahaz of Judah .[1] Also, at the refusal of Ahaz, who had threatened to lay siege on Judah and to have Ahaz conquered with a puppet king who was the son of Tabeel (Isa. 7:6). Before the invasion, Judah and Ahaz were frightened which is indicated by the fact that trees shook in the wind (Isaiah 7:2).

God also sent Isaiah to confront Ahaz and bring him a message of hope.[2] The prophet urged the king not to fear the two kings in the North because they were said to be two burning grouts of firebrands whose plans could not succeed (Isaiah 7: 4-7). God made a promise to save Judah that Ahaz would stand in faith:” You will not stand at all unless you stand in your faith”

(Isaiah. 7:9). This had been a turning point in the history of Judah. Ahaz was not in the assurance of being under the safety of the Lord, but he needed a political alliance of Assyria.[3] This action resulted in the submission and humiliation of their devotion and reliance on human strength rather than Godly commitment due to the lack of faith and lack of holiness.

Names of children and Theological

Significance of their Names.

The prophecy of Isaiah mentions several children whose names were used symbolically as an indication of prophecy, and each of them carries theological significance. The latter is Shear-jashub, his own son, who was called Shear-jashub, meaning “a remnant shall come back”. Being at that moment when he went out to meet Ahaz (Isaiah 7:3) was a constant reminder of Isaiah that even though the judgment was impending, God would save a religious few.[4] The name symbolizes prudence and optimism: when the majority of the nation was to be ruined, should the faithful remain, they would be restored back.

The second child is Immanuel, which means “God with us” (Isa. 7:14). This child is the center of this indication that is offered to Ahaz. When the king refused to demand a sign, God Himself provided him with a sign: a young woman would conceive and bear a son, namely Immanuel.[5] This was a prophecy that the threat of impending danger of Aram and Israel was to be removed at the young age of the child (Isa. 7: 15-16). To Judah, this message assured that God was with his people and that God was superior to the nations. But the Immanuel prophecy does not remain absolutely within the context of its setting as well. This child will be referred to in the subsequent chapters (Isaiah 8-9) with that almighty God, wonderful counselor, mighty, and will

always be the father, prince of peace, and this means that there will be the messianic element of it that is not associated with the Ahazian times.[6]

As stated in Isaiah, 8: 1-4, the third son is called Maher-shalal-hash-baz, which translates to swift is the plunder, swift is the prey. His name symbolizes the reckless disposition of the

Assyrian army to make a judgment of Aram and Israel. These allegorical names are arranged in the propagation of the plan of God imminent judgment (Maher-shalal-hash-baz) and of a remnant (Shear-jashub) and the end word of the Godly presence and salvation (Immanuel).[7] They all together alter the message of how discipline and redemption are, among others, the purposes of God that are founded on His faithfulness towards the covenant.

The Theological Idea and Applicability of the Immanuel Sign.

The Theological message in the Immanuel sign is the one where the sign goes around God, and he is faithful and never gives up in the face of human fear and failure. The prophecy of Isaiah is founded on the fact that the only means of having the divine deliverance is through faith in the promises of deliverance of God and not through political partnerships and other forms of human wisdom.[8] It is in this fact that the name Immanuel is a prophecy of this: that God Himself is among His people. It was a promise and threat in the case of Ahaz and Judah. God's Preservation was the advantage of protection, and want of faith would turn this protection into condemnation. The mark of Immanuel is therefore the full place of grace and responsibility.

Even the New Testament correlates the prophecy of Immanuel with the birth of Jesus Christ: in the Gospel of Matthew reads: All this happened to fulfil in that which was said by the

lord by the prophet: Behold the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel (Matt. 1: 22- 23). In Christ, the promise of God among us is achieved up to the ultimate achievement.[9] Its higher role was achieved in the incarnation where God was among the people through his Son, as the time in the life of Isaiah the sign merely indicated that God was doing it temporally.[10] Jesus is God loyal and can be able to assure the ultimate that God is near yet still all too active in providing redemption to His people.

Conclusion

The Immanuel prophecy, Isaiah 7:1-9:7, is one that incorporates history and oracles of the gods, and the Immanuel theology. It is set in the backdrop of political discord and reveals the faithfulness of God at a time when man is faithless. Isaiah makes use of symbolic names of the children to give a message of judgment and hope, and this concludes with the promise of the facts that God will constantly be with you. The Immanuel sign stops pointing farther, after all, than the eighth century to the incarnation of Christ, in which the whole idea of God with us is introduced. The Immanuel prophecy continues in recent days to assure the believers clinging onto it that the presence of God is a reassuring and assuring one, is encouraging and confirming to the believers in every generation, and so they do not develop a lapse of faith.

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[1] Robert B Chisholm Jr, *Handbook on the Prophets* (Baker Books, 2009), 16

[2] *ibid*, 24

[3] Elizabeth Esterhuizen and Alphonso Groenewald, "The tension between experiences of nothingness and hope in the metaphorical meaning of the names of the children (Isaiah 7-8) from a perspective of generational imprinted trauma and resilience," *Old Testament Essays* 36, no. 3 (2023): 687

[4] Robert B Chisholm Jr, *Handbook on the Prophets* (Baker Books, 2009), 25

[5] Surya Stft Nusantara, "Identification of Immanuel in the Context of Isaiah 7: 14," *Journal Theologia Forum*, no. 8 (2020): 73

[6] Elizabeth Esterhuizen and Alphonso Groenewald, "The tension between experiences of nothingness and hope in the metaphorical meaning of the names of the children (Isaiah 7-8) from a perspective of generational imprinted trauma and resilience," *Old Testament Essays* 36, no. 3 (2023): 692

[7] *ibid*, 694

[8] Alphonso Groenewald, "Isaiah 1: 4-9 as a post-exilic reflection." *Journal for Semitics* 20, no. 1 (2011): 93

[9] Alphonso Groenewald, "Isaiah 1: 4-9 as a post-exilic reflection." *Journal for Semitics* 20, no. 1 (2011): 94

[10] *ibid*, 91