

Yet there are many places in the prophetic books where the Lord caused the prophets to see the future in a way that blended the distant with the near. These elements are never confused, but sometimes they are so combined as to produce what seems to us an extremely rapid transition from one to the other.

Those who interpret this prophecy as referring entirely to the present take it as dealing only with the matter of relief from the attack of Ephraim and Syria. They consider it to mean simply this: a son will be born, and before this child is old enough to distinguish between things which are good and things which are harmful the region that is now hostile will be forsaken of both its kings. This seems quite natural in the light of the context, since the situation of immediate danger was very prominent in the minds of the king and of all the people. A tremendous objection to this view is found in the fact that it allows no element of rebuke whatever. It makes the whole thing a promise of comfort and blessing and causes verse 13 to be utterly meaningless.

The opposite extreme is to take the entire passage as referring to Christ. In view of the unworthiness of Ahaz it is quite natural to find here a prediction that God is going to replace him with His only-begotten Son, the true Immanuel, the virgin-born One. The difficulty with this view is that it seems to lack sufficient relationship to the immediate situation. It leaves altogether out of the account the difficulties of the people in the face of the attack by Ephraim and Syria, and it strikes great difficulties in the interpretation of verses 15 and 16. The suggestion has been made that verse 15 is a prediction of the simple life of our Lord as a child. This does not seem particularly reasonable, especially in view of the fact that the same phrase, "butter and honey shall he eat," is used later in the chapter (v. 22) in a description of the condition of depopulation which the exile will cause.

There will be so much produced by the cows and by the bees that the few people left cannot possibly eat it all.

Even greater difficulty is found in the sixteenth verse, which does not give much sense on this interpretation. There is no point in a declaration that before Christ is old enough to reach for the warm milk rather than for the red hot stove the king of Syria and the king of Israel, who are now such a