

days worse than any since the disruption of the kingdom, "even the king of Assyria." Ahaz wonders how Isaiah comes to mention the king of distant Assyria. Could Isaiah possibly have heard that secret arrangements had already been made with this distant power?

The rest of the chapter describes the results which will follow the coming of the king of Assyria. What Ahaz has planned as deliverance from the minor nations to the north will actually result in bringing the mighty Assyrian army right next to his own land. Within a few years Israel was conquered and its inhabitants driven into exile, and the Assyrian armies soon extended their raids into Judah. The emphasis here is on the resulting devastation and depopulation. In verses 17 to 25 Isaiah vividly describes what will happen. Agriculture will be greatly decreased for lack of manpower. The land will be covered with briars and thorns, and there will be little plowing. Land that was formerly cultivated will now be left to cows and bees. There will be plenty of butter and honey, but little of anything that requires much labor to produce.

This picture of devastation is in no way a promise of comfort; it is a description of the difficulty and trouble that will result from the scheme which Ahaz thought so clever.

The full fruition of the alliance Ahaz made is shown in the historical section of the Book of Isaiah, in chapters 36 to 39. There we find an Assyrian army overrunning most of Judah and threatening Jerusalem itself. Hezekiah has to reap what his father Ahaz had sown. It is striking to note that when the emissary of the Assyrian king calls upon Jerusalem to surrender, he stands at the very place where Isaiah, only a few years earlier, had delivered God's rebuke to Ahaz for his sinful scheme and his lack of trust (cf. 36:2 with 7:3).

In succeeding chapters of the Book of Immanuel the prophet's vision continues to oscillate between the present distress and the glorious future that Immanuel will ultimately bring.

Isaiah 8

The historical background and general teaching of chapter 8 is very similar to that of chapter 7. The messages that it