

Trials and the Stumbling Stone

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INTRODUCTION:

This prophecy of Isaiah was made during the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah. At this time, Judah faced an invasion by the combined forces of Israel, under the reign of Pekin, and Syria (also called Aram), under the reign of Rezin (2 Ki. 16:5 and Is. 7:1). God had promised that he would deliver Judah (Is. 7:5-9) and had offered the sign of Immanuel (Is. 7:10ff). But Ahaz did not want to look to the Lord and trust him. Instead he was captivated by the might of the nation Assyria and instead appealed to them thinking that they would protect Judah from Israel and Syria (2 Ki. 16:17). And so Isaiah announced that turning to Assyria would be the destruction of Judah (Is. 8:5-18).

A STUMBLING STONE OR A SANCTUARY

In this prophecy, Isaiah gives his readers two options for how they will see the Lord. Either he will be a sanctuary for them (v. 13-14a) or a stumbling stone to them (v. 14b-15). To fear the Lord is to not fear the enemy (v.13). Not fearing the Lord is not so much an issue of consciously not fearing him. It is a matter of not regarding him. Ahaz was given the opportunity of hearing from God (Is. 7:11-12). This wasn't Ahaz being pious. He was going apostate (2 Ki. 16).

IMMANUEL

This rock is far more than just a pivot point in the 8th century BC. God introduced this rock, this promise of deliverance, at the beginning of history. In every trial, in every temptation, the promise of deliverance has been there—a promise which is ultimately fulfilled by Christ.

1 PETER

This lesson gets picked up in 1 Peter, (1 Pet. 1:6-8). Suffering will test your faith. It brings you to the point that Ahaz was at. Your task at that moment is to be sure that you look towards Christ. When we look to Christ, we find that our suffering is turned into glory. Christ is the great example of this (1:11). Peter specifically has this lesson from Ahaz in mind from the OT when he speaks about the trials that we will go through (1 Pet. 2:7-8, 3:14, and Rom. 9:33).

This lesson that godly suffering leads to godly glory is throughout the rest of 1 Peter. Suffer 4:1, for glory 4:11. Suffer 4:13, for glory 4:13. Suffer 4:14 and 4:19, for glory 4:14, 16. Suffer, for glory 5:1, a crown of glory 5:4. Suffer 5:9, for eternal glory 5:10 eternal glory. Suffer 5:10, for eternal glory 5:11.

So don't stumble on the trials. Lift your eyes to Christ and the eternal glory that waits for you.



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