

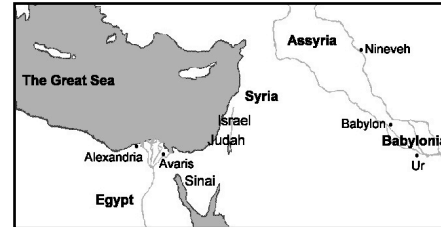
The Triumph of Grace over Failure

2 Kings 16:1-9; Isaiah 7:1-17; Matthew 1:21-25

Leading up to Christmas our theme is going to be: 'Immanuel, God with us'. The incarnation of God as a man, in Jesus, is the great fact that changes everything else. Our first passage is the most unlikely Advent passage: **2 Kings 16:1-9**.

Background

The year is 734BC. Ahaz, a descendant of King David, is on the throne in Judah. He is a worshipper of idols and he is facing invasion from Israel and Syria to the north, as well as the threat from the new super-power Assyria.



Ahaz's response was to try and buy the protection of Assyria. But God uses the crisis to get Ahaz's attention. We hear about that in the second passage: **Isaiah 7:1-17**

Ahaz - failure in place of faith: The prophet Isaiah meets Ahaz whilst he is securing the water supply to the city of Jerusalem. He takes his son, Shear-jashub with him as an encouragement - even if the worst happens, 'a remnant will return'. God offers Ahaz a radical alternative to selling out to Assyria: to trust God to deliver him. Trusting God, when the odds are against us, is the struggle each of us faces.

God offers Ahaz a sign, to prove He is serious about saving him - but Ahaz refuses. He has already made up his mind not to trust God. Instead he chose to look for protection to Assyria. That is the tragedy of how low the house of David had sunk. Sadly, Assyria, ended up overrunning the country and bringing it to its knees. The truth is, if look to anything other than God as our ultimate, as our protector, it will end up consuming us.

But what was God's answer to Ahaz's failure?

Immanuel: Grace in place of failure: Isaiah tells Ahaz that God will raise up a new son, Immanuel, (which means, God with us), who will be the answer to the failure of the line of David. Even though Ahaz has proved himself faithless, God will prove Himself faithful to His promises.

Matthew picks up the story in **Matthew 1:20-25**.

Joseph is also a son of David. He becomes the legal father for Jesus - the Son of David, who will rescue us from our enemies. God's grace will triumph. He promises to be our ultimate super-power, if only we will trust him. The difference between the gospel and every other religion, is that everyone else says you have to try and save yourself - like Ahaz. The gospel tells us God comes and saves us. We don't have to climb the ladder to God, He has come down the ladder to us. Jesus was the answer to Ahaz's personal failures and the failures of his family, so He is for our failures. God was the Father to be trusted in times of political and economic upheaval, so He is for us. He was the answer to Ahaz's idolatry - looking for security in something other than in God, so Christ is for us. Jesus really is Immanuel, God with Us, the One who has come to save and rescue.