

# The Road from Conspiracy to Intimacy

04 - Metamorphosis: The Way of Transformation  
Church on the Park | Sunday, 19 SEPT 2021 | Glen Gerhauser

**Text:** “For thus the LORD spoke to me with mighty power and instructed me not to walk in the way of this people, saying, “You are not to say, ‘It is a conspiracy!’ In regard to all that this people call a conspiracy, And you are not to fear what they fear or be in dread of it. “It is the LORD of hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, And He shall be your dread” (Isa. 8:11–13, NASB; cf. Isa. 7-9).

**Theme:** The Father is leading us from mere knowledge about things to knowledge of him.

**Intro:** The time was eighth century BC, and both the Kingdom of Judah and the city of Jerusalem were shaking. Conspiracies abounded. Rumours spread that the King of Israel, Pekah, and the King of Aram, Rezin, were plotting to overthrow Ahaz and Jerusalem. Ahaz was trembling, and Jerusalem couldn't stop talking about what they feared: upheaval and destruction. Then the word of the Lord came strongly to Isaiah. It was a word that called the Jews not to fear what everyone was fearing. It was a call to stay calm, put your faith in Yahweh and stand in awe of him alone (Isa. 7:9). אִם לֹא תִאֱמָינוּ כִּי לֹא תִאֲמָנוּ:

## 1. The fear of the Lord displaces all other fears (Isa. 8:11-13).

- In Hebrew, the word for conspiracy is QEsher קֶשֶׁר (*qesher*).
  - It comes from the root קָשַׁר (*qāšar*) meaning bind, knot, tie, be in league or conspire.
  - In Isaiah 8:12 it refers to a treasonous conspiracy.
    - And, of course, treason is something we naturally fear.
  - Our English word ‘conspire’ is quite similar to the Hebrew word.
    - It's made of two components: ‘con’ meaning ‘with’ and ‘spire’ meaning ‘breathe’.
- There were numerous conspiracies in Scripture. People plotted against the prophets Jeremiah and Amos. Others conspired to overthrow kings, kings like Ahaz and David. But there was one conspiracy that outweighed them all.
  - The greatest conspiracy in history was the plot to crucify Jesus (Matt. 12:14; Mark 3:6).
  - Christ had no need to fear the conspiracy because God was with him. And he had no need for Peter's sword that cut off the high priest's servant's ear because Christ's Kingdom is not of this world.
  - Jesus saw that his Father was sovereign and that the enemy's animosity only led to his own demise.
  - The same way Christ responded to the conspiracy to kill him is the same way we should respond to the multitude of conspiracies: we don't need to worry because God is with us (Isa. 7:14, 8:8, 10, immanu el אִל עִמָּנוּ ).
- We fear the Lord and the fear of the Lord displaces all other fears.

- Early in my Christian walk, I got caught up in conspiracy theories. It was the early 90s, and the internet was uncommon.
- My friends and I subscribed to the mailing list of a few different secret societies to find out about the advances of the one-world government.
  - Back then, we thought that George Bush Senior was probably the anti-christ since he talked about the New World Order.
- We would eagerly await letters in the mail (physical mail) from these secret societies.
  - One of them was the Skull and Crossbone society.
- We began to pressure our youth pastor, Steve Hodulick, about the secrets we knew.
  - We said, “You need to know this stuff.” We started thinking we were better and brighter because we had this secret knowledge about the conspiracies.
- I remember the exact place that we were trying to corner our youth pastor, and he gave this response, which I still remember today:
  - “I don’t know about all that stuff, but what I know is I love Jesus.”
  - Of course, at the time, we dismissed him as a simpleton. Our response: “I love Jesus’...haha.”
  - But these simple words began to grow in me and wake me up.
- You see, I was getting caught up in the web of conspiracy theories.
- My Christian faith was based on information rather than intimacy with Jesus.
- This awakening in my Christian life started me on a new road.
  - My faith shifted from being based on my knowledge to seeking the face of God and being based on intimacy with God.
    - No one can shake a faith that is founded on a real, dynamic and living relationship with the Father and his Son, Jesus.
  - A shift happened within me from fearing the world to fearing God.
  - Scripture, rather than speculation, became my everyday foundation.
- I believe I went through all of that in the early nineties to let you know in the twenties (around thirty years later) that there’s a better way than getting caught up in conspiracies.

## **2. Intimacy is spelled T-I-M-E (2 Cor. 11:1-6)**

- **T - Take Time (Matt. 6:6)**
  - To get to know God, it takes time.
    - Like I’ve said before, busyness is one of the number one killers of intimacy. We need to slow down and stop.
      - You’ll need to give God your time.
  - To grow in relationship with Jesus, it takes undivided time, whole hearted attention.
  - This is why Jesus taught us that when you pray to ‘shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret’ (Matt. 6:6).
    - If you’re spending quality time with your Father in the secret place, you won’t be worried about the secret plots of men.
  - Taking time means training yourself, it means love-motivated discipline.
- **I - Invest in Intimacy (2 Cor. 11:1-3)**

- Observe what the serpent is trying to do in 1 Corinthians 11:1-3 and in Genesis 3.
  - The serpent is trying to distort God's word and move Eve away from intimacy with God to mere knowledge about stuff.
  - The serpent wants to make everything very complicated, introducing death and confusion.
  - The serpent does not want us to have a single and pure devotion to Jesus. He wants to mix it with other things and replace it with our own works.
- **M - Make Music (Ps 27:6; 33:2; 57:7, NIV, etc.)**
  - The Psalms continually exhort us to make music to God.
  - Music—if done rightly—cultivates intimacy with God.
  - Music transcends words and helps your soul communicate to God.
    - Music also allows God to communicate with you, superceding our own reasoning and logic.
      - Since our reasoning and logic is often faulty.
  - God is the creator of music.
- **E - Express Your Emotions (Ps. 42:4; 62:8; 142:2)**
  - The whole book of Psalms is an example of the Psalmists pouring out their heart, soul and emotions to God.
  - Your pouring out yourself to God gives God space to pour back into you.

### **3. Cultivate communion with Jesus instead of being caught up with conspiracies.**

- Communion with Jesus is the way to transformation.
- And being transformed is how the harvest of lost souls will come into the Kingdom.
- The Father wants his family at peace so that he can bring new people into his family.
  - He doesn't want to bring a harvest into a family feud.

**Conclusion:** The fear of the Lord will displace all fears. The fear of the Lord is also the gateway into intimacy with God. And it's through intimacy—communion with Jesus—that you are transformed.

## END NOTES

From *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*

### AHAZ

a'-haz ('achaz, "he has grasped," [2 Kings 16](#); [2 Chronicles 28](#); [Isaiah 7:10](#); Achaz).

#### 1. Name:

The name is the same as Jehoahaz; hence appears on Tiglath-pileser's Assyrian inscription of 732 BC as Ia-u-ha-zi. The sacred historians may have dropped the first part of the name in consequence of the character of the king.

#### 2. The Accession:

Ahaz was the son of Jotham, king of Judah. He succeeded to the throne at the age of 20 years (according to another reading 25). The chronology of his reign is difficult, as his son Hezekiah is stated to have been 25 years of age when he began to reign 16 years after ([2 Kings 18:2](#)). If the accession of Ahaz be placed as early as 743 BC, his grandfather Uzziah, long unable to perform the functions of his office on account of his leprosy ([2 Chronicles 26:21](#)), must still have been alive. (Others date Ahaz later, when Uzziah, for whom Jotham had acted as regent, was already dead.)

#### 3. Early Idolatries:

Although so young, Ahaz seems at once to have struck out an independent course wholly opposed to the religious traditions of his nation. His first steps in this direction were the causing to be made and circulated of molten images of the Baalim, and the revival in the valley of Hinnom, south of the city, of the abominations of the worship of Moloch ([2 Chronicles 28:2,3](#)). He is declared to have made his own son "pass through the fire" ([2 Kings 16:3](#)); the chronicler puts it even more strongly:

he "burnt his children in the fire" ([2 Chronicles 28:3](#)). Other acts of idolatry were to follow.

#### 4. Peril from Syria and Israel:

The kingdom of Judah was at this time in serious peril. Rezin, king of Damascus, and Pekah, king of Samaria, had already, in the days of Jotham, begun to harass Judah ([2 Kings 15:37](#)); now a conspiracy was formed to dethrone the young Ahaz, and set upon the throne a certain "son of Tabeel" ([Isaiah 7:6](#)). An advance of the two kings was made against Jerusalem,

although without success ([2 Kings 16:5](#); [Isaiah 7:1](#)); the Jews were expelled from Elath ([2 Kings 16:6](#)), and the country was ravaged, and large numbers taken captive ([2 Chronicles 28:5](#)). Consternation was universal. The heart of Ahaz "trembled, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the forest tremble with the wind" ([Isaiah 7:2](#)). In his extremity Ahaz appealed to the king of Assyria for help ([2 Kings 16:7](#); [2 Chronicles 28:16](#)).

#### 5. Isaiah's Messages to the King:

Amid the general alarm and perturbation, the one man untouched by it in Jerusalem was the prophet Isaiah. Undismayed, Isaiah set himself, apparently single-handed, to turn the tide of public opinion from the channel in which it was running, the seeking of aid from Assyria. His appeal was to both king and people. By Divine direction, meeting Ahaz "at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, in the highway of the fuller's field," he bade him have no fear of "these two tails of smoking firebrands," Rezin and Pekah, for, like dying torches, they would speedily be extinguished ([Isaiah 7:3](#)). If he would not believe this he would not be established ([Isaiah 7:9](#)). Failing to win the young king's confidence, Isaiah was sent a second time, with the offer from Yahweh of any sign Ahaz chose to ask, "either in the depth, or in the height above," in attestation of the truth of the Divine word. The frivolous monarch refused the arbitrament on the hypocritical ground, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt Yahweh" ([Isaiah 7:10-12](#)). Possibly his ambassadors were already dispatched to the Assyrian king. Whenever they went, they took with them a large subsidy with which to buy that ruler's favor ([2 Kings 16:8](#)). It was on this occasion that Isaiah, in reply to Ahaz, gave the reassuring prophecy of Immanuel ([Isaiah 7:13](#)).

#### 6. Isaiah's Tablet:

As respects the people, Isaiah was directed to exhibit on "a great tablet" the words "For Maher-shalal-hash-baz" ("swift the spoil, speedy the prey"). This was attested by two witnesses, one of whom was Urijah, the high priest. It was a solemn testimony that, without any action on the part of Judah, "the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before the king of Assyria" ([Isaiah 8:1-4](#)).

#### 7. Fall of Damascus and Its Results:

It was as the prophet had foretold. Damascus fell, Rezin was killed ([2 Kings 16:9](#)), and Israel was raided ([2 Kings 15:29](#)). The action brought temporary relief to Judah, but had the effect of placing her under the heel of Assyria. Everyone then living knew that there could be no equal alliance between

Judah and Assyria, and that the request for help, accompanied by the message, "I am thy servant" ([2 Kings 16:7,8](#)) and by "presents" of gold and silver, meant the submission of Judah and the annual payment of a heavy tribute. Had Isaiah's counsel been followed, Tiglath-pileser would probably, in his own interests, have been compelled to crush the coalition, and Judah would have retained her freedom.

#### 8. Sun-Dial of Ahaz:

The political storm having blown over for the present, with the final loss of the important port of Elath on the Red Sea ([2 Kings 16:6](#)), Ahaz turned his attention to more congenial pursuits. The king was somewhat of a dilettante in matters of art, and he set up a sun-dial, which seems to have consisted of a series of steps arranged round a short pillar, the time being indicated by the position of the shadow on the steps (compare [2 Kings 20:9-11](#); [Isaiah 38:8](#)). As it is regarded as possible for the shadow to return 10 steps, it is clear that each step did not mark an hour of the day, but some smaller period.

#### 9. The Lavers and Brazen Sea:

Another act of the king was to remove from the elaborate ornamental bases on which they had stood (compare [1 Kings 7:27-39](#)), the ten layers of Solomon, and also to remove Solomon's molten sea from the 12 brazen bulls which supported it (compare [1 Kings 7:23-26](#)), the sea being placed upon a raised platform or pavement ([2 Kings 16:17](#)). From [Jeremiah 52:20](#), where the prophet sees "the 12 brazen bulls that were under the bases," it has been conjectured that the object of the change may have been to transfer the layers to the backs of the bulls.

#### 10. The Damascus Altar:

To this was added a yet more daring act of impiety. In 732 Ahaz was, with other vassal princes, summoned to Damascus to pay homage to Tiglath-pileser ([2 Kings 16:10](#); his name appears in the Assyrian inscription). There he saw a heathen altar of fanciful pattern, which greatly pleased him. A model of this was sent to Urijah the high priest, with instructions to have an enlarged copy of it placed in the temple court. On the king's return to Jerusalem, he sacrificed at the new altar, but, not satisfied with its position, gave orders for a change. The altar had apparently been placed on the east side of the old altar; directions were now given for the brazen altar to be moved to the north, and the Damascus altar to be placed in line with it, in front of the temple giving both equal honor. Orders were further given to Urijah that the customary sacrifices should be offered on the new altar, now called "the

great altar," while the king reserved the brazen altar for himself "to inquire by" ([2 Kings 16:15](#)).

#### 11. Further Impieties:

Even this did not exhaust the royal innovations. We learn from a later notice that the doors of the temple porch were shut, that the golden candlestick was not lighted, that the offering of incense was not made, and other solemnities were suspended ([2 Chronicles 29:7](#)). It is not improbable that it was Ahaz who set up 'the horses of the sun' mentioned in [2 Kings 23:11](#), and gave them accommodation in the precincts of the temple. He certainly built the "altars .... on the roof of the upper chamber of Ahaz," perhaps above the porch of the temple, for the adoration of the heavenly bodies (verse 12). Many other idolatries and acts of national apostasy are related regarding him ([2 Chronicles 28:22](#)).

#### 12. Recurrence of Hostilities:

In the later years of his unhappy reign there was a recurrence of hostilities with the inhabitants of Philistia and Edom, this time with disaster to Judah (see the list of places lost in [2 Chronicles 28:18,19](#)). New appeal was made to Tiglath-pileser, whose subject Ahaz, now was, and costly presents were sent from the temple, the royal palace, and even the houses of the princes of Judah, but without avail ([2 Chronicles 28:19-21](#)). The Assyrian 'distressed' Ahaz, but rendered no assistance. In his trouble the wicked king only "trespassed yet more" ([2 Chronicles 28:22](#)).

#### 13. Death of Ahaz:

Ahaz died in 728, after 16 years of misused power. The exultation with which the event was regarded is reflected in Isaiah's little prophecy written "in the year that King Ahaz died" ([Isaiah 14:28-32](#)). The statement in [2 Kings 16:20](#) that Ahaz "was buried with his fathers in the city of David" is to be understood in the light of [2 Chronicles 28:27](#), that he was buried in Jerusalem, but that his body was not laid in the sepulchers of the kings of Israel. His name appears in the royal genealogies in [1 Chronicles 3:13](#) and [Matthew 1:9](#).

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### **Bibliography Information**

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