

# God's Purpose and Man's Sin.

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It is very striking the way in which these points are brought out in Isaiah 7. The circumstances are given in verses 1-2. The apostate Pekah, king of Israel had formed an alliance with the king of Syria against Jerusalem, filling the hearts of Ahaz and his people with terror. "His heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind." They had no power to contend with such powerful foes, and God was not in all their thoughts (contrast 2 Chron. 20)

But Jehovah took the matter up. The plot was of a very determined character. Nothing less was in the minds of those kings than the blotting out of the house of David, and the setting up of a personage called "the son of Tabeal." However little they intended it, this was really a blow at the promised Messiah. If they did not mean this, Satan did, he was the real author of the movement unquestionably. This became at once a case for Jehovah to deal with. It touched the accomplishment of His purposes. True, the house of David was in a deplorable state. David's heir was an evil man, one of the worst that ever sat upon the throne of Judah (2 Chron. 28: 1-5, 22-25). There was no reason, its far as he was concerned, for Jehovah to interfere. Ahaz and Judah deserved the worst that their enemies could inflict upon them.

But God takes care of His own purposes; no power on earth or in hell can frustrate them. He intends David's son and heir to have universal dominion in the coming day; He would therefore preserve the line until the end. "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2: 13). Accordingly, the prophet was sent to Ahaz to assure him concerning the evil counsel of his enemies that "it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass." Ephraim should be broken within 65 years, spite of the alliance with heathen Syria.

But Jehovah vouchsafed more than this. He spoke of Immanuel. He bade Ahaz ask a sign of Him, "either in the depth, or in the height above." Ahaz hypocritically declined, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah." Then came the wonderful word, "the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." This was enough. Messiah must come of David's line, according to promise, the house of David therefore, however unworthy, should be divinely preserved until the appointed hour. I do not stay to go into the details of the prophecy, very blessed though they are; my sole object being to draw attention to the fact, so full of comfort to the believing heart, that God's purposes never fail, however great may be the sin of man. Wherever we look at the creature, in Israel, in the Church, or elsewhere, it is a history of deepest failure, nevertheless God's will goes on to its accomplishment — He will make all good in its day, for His own name's sake.

But does the sin of man go unpunished? By no means, whether in the house of David, or in guiltier Christendom.

Consequently Ahaz, in verses 17-25, had to hear the righteous sentence of God upon himself and his wicked people. The promise concerning the virgin's son was given to "*the house of David*" (ver. 13); the threat of chastisement was addressed to "*thee and thy people, and thy father's house*" (verse 17; compare 2 Sam. 7-9) If David's house was to be preserved, individual and national iniquity should be dealt with fully. Hence Jehovah would hiss for the fly from Egypt (fulfilled in the days of Josiah), and for the bee from Assyria. Jehovah would shave Judah with his hired Assyrian razor, and leave her

poor and desolate. Where there had been many, there, should be few, and where prosperity and plenty had been known, briars and thorns should abound. All this has been fulfilled to the letter, as we know. On the same principle will be the dealings of God with Christendom presently, " For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God " (1 Peter 4: 17). All individual iniquity will be visited, for every evil worker will be made to feel His hand, every corrupter of the temple of God will be destroyed (1 Cor. 3: 17). But His purposes will not fall to the ground. However deeply the church has failed in her responsibility, and however sadly she has mixed herself with evil men, His purposes concerning her will all be accomplished. He will soon have all His own in heavenly glory. Christ will shortly present the Church to Himself glorious, holy and unblemished, His holy loving hand having removed every spot and wrinkle, and all such things.

Happy resting place for faith in an evil and dark day!