

*What is the meaning of Is. vii, 8–9? The passage is addressed to Achaz, who is told, “If you will not believe, you will not continue.” How is this fulfilled? It does not seem to be fulfilled in Achaz. If the subject is changed to the house of David, there is no indication. Achaz is mentioned in verses 3 and 10.*

The words quoted are in the plural, whereas the words addressed to Achaz (vii, 4, 5, 11) are in the singular; there is therefore an indication of a change of subject, and the words quoted are addressed either to the house of David (cf. vii, 2, 13, 17) or (as I should think rather more likely) to the people in general (vii, 2, 17). The warning seems quite general.

Some further notes may be helpful. (1) *The text.* After “believe,” the Hebrew has *ki* (“because,” etc.), which does not seem to make sense; probably we should read *bi* (“believe me,” or better, “trust me”: see below). *k* and *b* are very similar in Hebrew. (2) *The translation.* “Be established,” confirmed, supported, is better than “continue.” (3) *The play on words.* The two verbs are almost identical in writing and pronunciation, being in fact different conjugations (Hiphil and Niphal) of the same Hebrew verb, though the two conjugations (as sometimes happens) have rather different meanings. The word *amen* comes from the same root. (4) *The historical context.* The northern kingdom (Israel) and Syria (=“Aram,” capital at Damascus) had combined against the southern kingdom (Judah) and King Achaz (742–725 B.C.). God promises an early deliverance (vii, 16: viii, 4) in the form of an Assyrian invasion of the two attacking kingdoms. But upon vii, 14ff. I have already commented in an answer in *SCRIPTURE* (July 1947). (5) *fides, fidelitas, fiducia* (faith, faithfulness, trust or confidence) should be carefully distinguished in Holy Scripture, though it should be no less carefully noted that the second and third presuppose the first. In the Old Testament the great mysteries of the Christian faith, the Blessed Trinity, Incarnation, etc. had not been revealed, so that the emphasis is mainly on *fidelitas*, though with much encouragement *fiducia*; there can hardly be said to be a Hebrew word for *fides* as such. In the New Testament our Lord chiefly requires *fiducia* in Himself, to which *fides* however is essential. In St. Paul there is mainly question of a living faith, *fidelitas*, but in I Cor. xiii, 13 we have faith distinguished from hope and charity, which must therefore be *fides* as such, as indeed is illustrated by the preceding verse.

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*What is the explanation of Jn. i, 51? “Amen, Amen I say to you, you shall see the heaven opened, and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man?”*

Our Lord's first words to Nathaniel (Jn. i, 47ff.), surprising him with the hidden knowledge they manifested, awakened such deep faith