

knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good." The Hebrew expression used is a common Hebrew method of indicating the time when something occurs. The King James Version translation would be grammatically possible, but the other is much more in line with the usual reading of this type of Hebrew phrase. By the time that this child knows enough to reach for the warm milk instead of for the red hot poker, he will have plenty of butter and honey to eat. The present condition of war's necessity, with shortage of materials which come in from the country districts, will be at an end, and butter and honey will be plentiful. The reason is given in verse 16. Before such a child, even if born next year, would be a very few years old, both these hostile kings will be gone.

The Results of Ahaz' Scheme

We can well imagine the thoughts of Ahaz as he heard this prediction. He might be greatly disturbed by verse 14 -- a prediction that another king would take his place. Yet it was nothing to get greatly excited about, because the coming king was not even born as yet, and Isaiah had not stated the time when He would come. Verses 15 and 16 suggest that He might be born immediately. On the assumption of His life beginning immediately these verses use it as a measuring stick and apply it to the present time. The note of rebuke may be almost forgotten in the declaration that God is going to deliver His people.

By this time, Ahaz is feeling better. After all, this is a declaration that he is going to be victorious against these kings from the north. This may help the morale of the people, provided that it does not make them overconfident. Ahaz is certain, anyway, that it is true, in view of his secret treaty with Assyria. His present desire is to strengthen the defenses, so as to hold off the invader until the Assyrian army arrives. He knows that before long the forces of this powerful aggressor will attack Israel and Syria from the rear, and Judah will be safe. We can imagine him relaxing and waiting as patiently as possible for Isaiah to stop talking, so that he can go on with his defense inspection.

Verse 17, however, is not particularly pleasing to him. Isaiah says that the Lord is going to bring grievous days,