

Prophets Foreshadow Messiah's Birth

God's Word:

Isaiah 7:13-17

Luke 1:30-38

Key Verse:

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."

-Isaiah 7:14



Breaking It Down:

The term *Immanuel* (or *Emmanuel*) occurs four times in the Bible. It is a straightforward combination of words that mean "with us (is) God." The only place it occurs in the New Testament is Matthew 1:23, where the writer quotes Isaiah to show how the birth of Jesus fulfilled prophecy. The other three places are all in Isaiah.

This sign, this son, has three parts, and each is significant. The first is the most astounding: the pregnancy of a virgin. It will not be an ordinary event, but something extraordinary, miraculous.

The other two signs are easier to understand. The child will be a son. The child will be called Immanuel. This does not mean that any boy named Immanuel is a fulfillment of this sign. In this case, the giving of a certain name is less important than what the name means. Immanuel means "God is with us." This marvelous birth of a child with no natural father can only be interpreted as a sign of the presence of God.



This leads us to two very important questions. The first is: Why a virgin birth? Isaiah doesn't really explain it, but Matthew, writing more than 700 years later, does.

The Messiah is born of a virgin so that prophecy is fulfilled. It is miraculous the way God confirmed His presence in a historical event. It is worth noting that neither Isaiah nor Matthew gives any hint that a virgin birth is necessary to escape the curse of original sin, as is often proposed. It is a sign, a prophecy fulfilled.

The second question is more difficult: What does this sign mean to Ahaz? Should he expect some young woman in Jerusalem to announce that she has become miraculously pregnant? Does it point to the birth of Ahaz's or Isaiah's son? None of them were virginal. Ultimately, we must understand this is God's way of reminding Ahaz to trust Him, for God is with His people and has not abandoned them.



Living It:

The man experienced blurred vision and went for an eye examination. He was sure it was a cataract. After extensive tests, the doctor gave him the bad news. He had suffered a mini-stroke in his optic nerve. Then the doctor said, "There's nothing we can do to correct the problem."



Sometimes, we think that modern medicine can do something about every illness that we are not prepared for when we are told there is nothing doctors, or we, can do. Experiences like that often drive people to prayer. We know ultimately that only the Lord can heal us and take care of us. We also know that the love of Jesus can help us through difficult experiences.

The account of Ahaz and Isaiah reminds us of God's mercy and comfort, and of the futility of refusing to turn to the Lord and live as He desires. All of us are tempted at times to try and work our own way out of a jam.

Some say it is foolish not to take advantage of everything we can do for ourselves. We have so much money, training, education, skills and power. We have modern science and modern medicine, so who needs God?

Because we believe in God, we have many opportunities to encourage others who face seemingly insurmountable problems. Our calling is to bring hope and comfort to the fearful, as Isaiah tried to do for Ahaz.

We offer Jesus – the Christ child whom Gabriel announced to Mary – to people who do not know the Savior. He will never abandon us. He will use us if we have the

heart of submission to His will that we see in Mary. And we need not be afraid. Immanuel is with us.

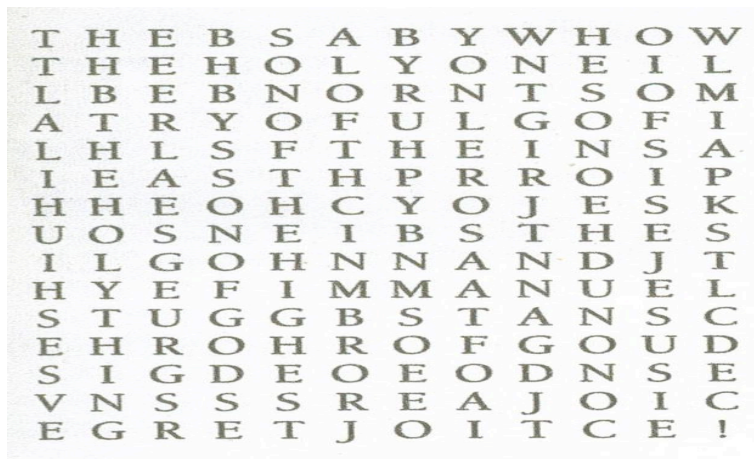


Questions:

1. Why did the Lord declare through Isaiah that Ahaz would be given a sign?
2. What is significant about the name “Immanuel?”
3. Do the signs and wonders of Scripture increase your faith? How?
4. If a certain messenger pointed out something in the Bible you didn’t want to hear, how would you react? Why?



Do It!



Look at today’s two texts and find names and descriptions given to the child who was to be born as described to Ahaz and to Mary. Mark out all letters so that you will be able to read the two filler messages, which are truths regarding today’s study. Letters will be read left to right, top to bottom. Try doing it without using the following list of words and phrases.

Word and phrase list: great, Immanuel, Jesus, king, Son, Son of God, Son of the Highest, the holy one, the holy thing, virgin born.