

## **(Items for Website November 28, 2021)**

### **Sermon Description**

It's Advent season! This special time of year allows us to focus on the joyful and miraculous first coming of Jesus, God's Son and our Savior. This Advent season our theme is Immanuel, God With Us. For this first sermon of the series, we will explore Immanuel, God with us in our Hopes and our Fears. Isaiah chapter 7 describes the first prophecy of Immanuel. Whether we're besieged by an overwhelming enemy, peacefully rocking our newborn baby, or any circumstance in between, God has promised to be with us! And God is faithful to keep his promise!

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What is an example of an event in the Bible or the life of another believer from history that you can see they trusted in God's promise to be with them?
2. When was a time that you were greatly comforted by the promise or experience of God with us?
3. What makes it difficult to trust God's promise to be with us?
4. What is the difference between believing God's promise with one's mind and living out life in that promise?
5. What do you tend to trust in rather than trusting in God and his presence/provision?
6. What are some areas of your life that you need to live the experience of God with us?
7. What are some ways that you may be able to help others to believe and live out the promise of God with us?
8. What are some application points that this promise has for our church as a corporate body?

### **Prayer Points**

1. Pray for the joy of Christ to flood our hearts this Advent Season!
2. Ask God to impress upon each of us the depth and power of his promise to be with us!
3. Pray for those who feel far from God or especially lonely. Pray that they will feel drawn to God through Jesus and will have their souls ministered to in a supernatural way.
4. Pray that we will not only believe God's Immanuel promise, but that we will trust it and live by it!
5. Ask God to show us the glory of Christ's coming to be our Savior and motivate us to join him in proclaiming Christ so that all may hear, believe, and be saved!

(Sermon Notes for November 28, 2021)

**Immanuel: God with us in our Hopes and Fears**

Isaiah 7:1-16 (ESV)

7 In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. 2 When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.

3 And the Lord said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field. 4 And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah. 5 Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, 6 "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it," 7 thus says the Lord God:

"It shall not stand,

and it shall not come to pass.

8 For the head of Syria is Damascus,

and the head of Damascus is Rezin.

And within sixty-five years

Ephraim will be shattered from being a people.

9 And the head of Ephraim is Samaria,

and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.

If you are not firm in faith,

you will not be firm at all."

**The Sign of Immanuel**

10 Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz: 11 "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." 13 And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. 15 He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. 16 For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.

## Introduction

It's Advent season! This special time of year allows us to focus on the joyful and miraculous first coming of Jesus, God's Son and our Savior. This Advent season our theme is Immanuel, God With Us.

Immanuel is one of the most beautiful and intimate names for Jesus our Savior. It poignantly describes the deep truth that God not only sees us in our need and desperation, but that he comes down to us to be with us and to rescue us and to redeem us for himself.

When I think of the heart of the term Immanuel, a very real experience comes to mind. Have you ever found yourself standing over a fussy baby in their crib and the only way they will calm down and go to sleep is if you rest your hand on their back? This reminds me of "God With Us!" Have you ever felt the peace and assurance that comes from living in the promise that God is with us?

Immanuel, God with us, is the perfect way to think of Christ's Advent.

By the light of nature we see God as a God above us, by the light of the law we see Him as a God against us, but by the light of the gospel we see Him as Emmanuel, God with us.

**-Matthew Henry**

If we could condense all the truths of Christmas into only three words, these would be the words: 'God with us.' **-John F. MacArthur**

For this first sermon of the series, we will explore Immanuel, **God with us in our Hopes and our Fears.**

## O Little Town of Bethlehem

Oh little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth, the everlasting light  
The **hopes** and **fears** of all the years are met in thee tonight.

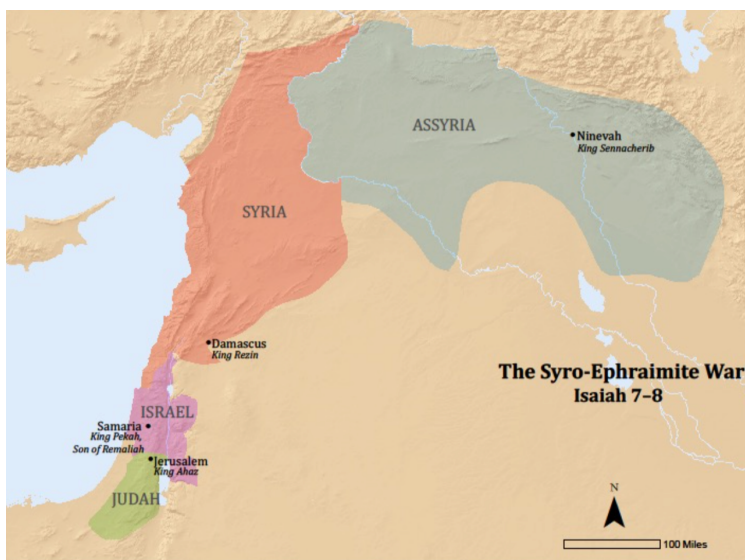
Isaiah chapter 7 describes the first prophecy of Immanuel. Whether we're besieged by an overwhelming enemy, peacefully rocking our newborn baby, or any circumstance in between, God has promised to be with us! And God is faithful to keep his promise!

## Pray

### God With Us in our Fears

I want to tell you a Christmas story. This is the story of the First Immanuel. It is found in Isaiah 7:1-16. (For cross reference, Isaiah chapter 7 takes place chronologically between verses 5 and 6 of 2 Kings 16.)

- a. This story takes place around the year 735 B.C. in a divided kingdom. The southern kingdom of Judah is under the kingship of Ahaz.
- b. Ahaz is an idolatrous king and has led the nation to forsake worshipping the one true God and to pursue the worship of false gods of the neighboring peoples. Ahaz even promoted and participated in child sacrifice. **2 Kings 16:2-4** *2 Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God, as his father David had done, 3 but he walked in the way of the kings of Israel. He even burned his son as an offering, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. 4 And he sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.*
- c. Two nations had risen up to wage war against the kingdom of Judah: the northern kingdom of Israel and the nation of Syria. (Sometimes the nations would be referred to by their capital cities, eg. Samaria for Israel and Damascus for Syria and Jerusalem for Judah, or the lineage of kings, eg. the House of David for Judah).
- d. Map Illustration Slide



<https://christchurchpelham.org/adult-christian-learning/the-syro-ephraimite-war/>

- e. As these two nations brought war to Israel and besieged Jerusalem, Ahaz and the people were terrified. **Isaiah 7:2** 'When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.'
- f. Fears! There must be few other fears as gripping and courage destroying as looking over the walls of the city to see thousands upon thousands of troops amassed for battle against you and your countrymen. Not only that, but the reports of the destruction that this army is bringing down on the surrounding villages and towns must have melted the hearts of the people.
- g. Let's take a moment and reflect on the fears that we face. What fears have besieged your heart?
- h. God sent Isaiah to Ahaz with a message of encouragement. God will be your ally and the war being waged against you will not be successful. You will not be defeated. Be firm in your faith! v. 9
- i. God invites Ahaz to ask for a sign that will strengthen his faith that God will accomplish this deliverance. "Ask anything," God told Ahaz.
- j. But Ahaz responded in a hypocritical way that exposed his lack of relationship with and trust in God. **Isaiah 7:10-13 (ESV)**

10 Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz: 11 "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test." 13 And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?"

- k. Here is where we see a shift: God comes to us in our fears and prompts our hearts to hope.

### **God with us in our Hopes**

- l. God steps in and offers a sign of hope in spite of Ahaz's faithlessness. **Isaiah 7:14-16 (ESV)**

14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. 15 He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. 16 For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.

- m. A virgin will conceive and bear a son and give him the name Immanuel!  
 There are **2 times** in the Bible that this came true. A double fulfillment of this prophecy. A near fulfillment and an ultimate fulfillment.
- One was the sign of a promised temporal deliverance: near fulfillment
  - One was the author of an eternal deliverance: ultimate fulfillment
- n. Although there are differing theories, most orthodox scholars agree that the fulfillment that was a sign to Ahaz and the people of Judah in Isaiah's day most likely resembled the following:
- i. A young woman, likely an unmarried maiden of marriage age, (possibly within the royal family) would soon get married, conceive a child, give birth to a son, and name him Immanuel.
  - ii. The naming of him Immanuel could have been in ignorance of the prophecy and either a genuine expression of faith in God for deliverance or even an attempt to bolster confidence in Ahaz's plan (which we will get to in a moment). The good faith of the naming of the child has no bearing on God's working of the fulfillment of the sign and carrying out his plan.
  - iii. God's promise continues that within the early years of the boy's life (around the time he begins to eat solid food or the time he can begin to understand right and wrong), God will deliver Judah from the siege of the two nations of Israel and Syria.
  - iv. God is with us in our Hopes!  
 (Oh that we would experience the hope of the young mother who knows "God is with us!")
    1. Nothing more hopeful than the birth of a child (a son in the biblical context/ much of the world in most times)
    2. A hope that allows a young parent to face many worries and fears
    3. The fears don't go away but the hope produces perseverance
    4. A hope that remembers our dependence on God

### **Jesus is Immanuel!**

- o. As I mentioned, there is an ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy! Jesus is Immanuel!
  - i. He came to rescue God's people spiritually
  - ii. The eternally existent Son of God stepped into humanity through a truly miraculous virgin birth. While there is ambiguity about the identity of the young mother of Isaiah's day, there is no such

ambiguity surrounding God's choosing Mary to be the mother of Jesus, conceived miraculously by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures explain that the virgin birth of Christ is not only a key component of the fulfillment of this Immanuel prophecy, it is also a foundational truth in the power of the Gospel.

- iii. After stepping into humanity as our Immanuel, Jesus bore our sins on the cross and, sinless as he was, became sin for us, in order to provide the atoning covering of our sins that we might be brought into the eternal family of God and experience the eternal fulfillment of God with us by dwelling with God for all eternity.

### **Jesus is Immanuel!**

There was reason for Isaiah to refer to Christ in this context in view of the dark day Judah was experiencing. Isaiah was saying that, in contrast, a bright day was coming when the great Deliverer of God would arrive and bring relief from all such dark days for God's people.

**-Leon Wood, The Prophets of Israel**

- iv. Jesus continues the Immanuel promise when he says that he will never leave us nor forsake us but will be with us to the end of the age.
- v. Making good on this promise, The Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to dwell within each of us when we put our faith in Jesus.

### **God Himself will Rescue His People!**

- p. At this point you may be wondering how the story of Ahaz and besieged Jerusalem ended.
- q. Ahaz rejected God's promise of deliverance, choosing instead to make an appeal to the King of the nation of Assyria for rescue. He sent treasures from the temple of the Lord to persuade Assyria's intervention.
- r. Assyria did come to Judah's rescue, and the prophecy was fulfilled.
- s. However, God had desired that Ahaz would have trusted in God alone for deliverance. Just as in a later Messianic prophecy from Isaiah 9, God would himself deliver his people. The trust should have been in God and his power rather than appealing to the powers of the kingdoms of man.

### **God Himself will Rescue His People!**

The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. Isaiah 9:7 (ESV)

- t. Ahaz and Judah later suffered God’s judgement for their lack of trust in his promise when Assyria eventually turned on them and brought destruction and captivity. The irony not at all subtle that the nation to whom they turned for deliverance would in the end be their destruction around the year 700 B.C.

### **Observations on God with Us**

1. God’s promise to be with the people of Judah was not due the people’s faithfulness but due to God’s faithfulness.
2. God loves more faithfully than any other.

- a. **Mark Dever, The Message of the Old Testament: Isaiah**

“One of the most striking things about the book of Isaiah is the tenacity of God’s love for his unfaithful people. Again and again they turn from him and spurn him. They trust in other things. And again and again God tenaciously pursues them.”

3. We are each King Ahaz.
  - a. In our sinful flesh, we too are idolaters.
  - b. Facing the troubles handed down to us and those of our own making.
  - c. We, too, weary God by not trusting God’s promise of his presence and provision.
  - d. Trusting instead in our own wisdom or abilities to address our fears.
4. Jesus, the Messiah, is the fullness of God with us.

- a. **Mark Dever, The Message of the Old Testament: Isaiah**

“We watch the elaborate work and planning of God throughout the book (of Isaiah); but in the end, it’s as if he wants us to focus on something even more particularly. God is the solution to the people’s trust problem, yes, but he sharpens the focus more than that. The solution isn’t just to say, ‘God.’ The actual fulcrum of the hope for his people seems to come in a person, a Messiah.”

### **What do we do with “God with us”?**

1. When are you inclined to feel/think that God is not with you?
2. What do you tend to trust in rather than trusting in God’s presence and provision?
3. Trust the Promise of God with us.
  - a. Internalize this truth from head to heart.
  - b. Push back on fear, anxiety, and doubt.
  - c. Embrace faith, confidence, and assurance.
4. Live the Experience of God with us.
  - a. Slow down life to wait on the Lord.
  - b. Listen to the Lord and follow.