

GOD WITH US

Leader pages on pp. 102-105

THE POINT:
JESUS IS IMMANUEL—
GOD WITH US.

ISAIAH 7:14; MATTHEW 1:18-25

MEMORY VERSE

Isa. 7:14 Therefore, the LORD himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.

.....
Matt. 1:18 The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant from the Holy Spirit.

¹⁹ So her husband, Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

.....
²⁰ But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, don’t be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³ See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated “God is with us.”

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the Lord’s angel had commanded him. He married her

²⁵ but did not have sexual relations with her until she gave birth to a son. And he named him Jesus.

+
+
+

KEYWORDS

Immanuel (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23)—(God with us) implies Jesus’ deity. Mary’s virgin-born Son would be God Himself, living among His people.

Engaged (Matt. 1:18)—Though Joseph and Mary were not yet married, the Jewish custom considered the engagement stage as

a relationship that would require a divorce in order to be ended.

Jesus (v. 21)—This name is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua which means “Yahweh saves.” Jesus’ name revealed His purpose: He would rescue sinners from deserved punishment.

WHY IS THE PROMISE OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH SO IMPORTANT?

It was the biggest night of my senior basketball season. Our team wasn't great, but somehow we made the state semi-finals. Because this was unexpected, my dad had booked an event out of town that meant he would miss the game. I was crushed! I'll never forget my dad's words after he heard my pleas: "Son, I promise I'll be there."

The gym that night was filled with incredible anticipation. The place was packed with fans, but I was only concerned about one person. Would my dad be able to keep his promise? As I led my team onto the floor with our fight song filling the arena, I looked up into the stands, and there he was, cheering me on. My dad kept his promise!

In a world that is filled with broken promises, I am thankful for an earthly father who kept his. I am most thankful for our heavenly Father who always keeps His promises. In this God's grace and mercy abounds. Because God kept His promise given through the prophet Isaiah, we can celebrate Immanuel—God with us.

A Foretold Prophecy // Isaiah 7:14

The Bible is full of promises from God. He promised to send a Messiah who would save the world, and the fulfillment of this promise through the birth of Jesus Christ demonstrates the trustworthiness of our Lord. The specific details in this verse about a coming Messiah are what makes this prophecy a miracle of God.

Isaiah 7:14 is an exciting announcement. The Messiah would be born of a virgin and His name would be called Immanuel. Before we consider the importance of these two details, let's understand the context of this prophecy.

God called the prophet Isaiah, whose name means "Yahweh is salvation" during a time of struggle for God's people. Isaiah's words to the people pointed to the meaning of his name, which pointed to God as their salvation. In Isaiah 7, Ahaz was the king of Judah, the country was under attack, and his people were terrified (vv. 1-2). God offered to give Ahaz a sign that He was powerful enough to take care



THE POINT: JESUS IS IMMANUEL—GOD WITH US.

of their enemies, but Ahaz already may have been planning to ask Assyria for help and didn't think he needed God's help.

When King Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, Isaiah the prophet told the faithless house of David that God would give a sign anyway! The house of David's wickedness had tested God's patience, but God had a sign for them: "See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel" (v. 14).

WHY IS IT SIGNIFICANT THAT JESUS' BIRTH WAS FORETOLD HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE IT HAPPENED?

The fulfillment in the Messiah, was a miraculous virgin birth. As Matthew was inspired to recount the birth of Jesus, he used this translation of Isaiah 7:14, wanting us to see the miraculous virgin birth of Christ. The virgin birth of Christ is an important truth; Jesus had to be one of us—human—to die in our place. He couldn't be the perfect sacrifice if He were like every other human with a sin nature. The virgin birth means Jesus had no human father—God is His Father—therefore, Jesus was born without a sin nature. Jesus is fully man, and He is fully God. God is with us!

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU APPRECIATE ABOUT THIS BIBLICAL PROPHECY?

A Fulfilled Sign // Matthew 1:18-19

The Messiah would be born of a virgin. From a human perspective, a virgin birth is impossible. Over the centuries, people have laughed at this idea. It's quite possible that Joseph and Mary's own people laughed when they explained the situation. But God makes the impossible possible!

WHAT ARE OTHER EXAMPLES OF THE IMPOSSIBLE WORK OF GOD IN THE BIBLE?

While Joseph and Mary were engaged, Mary became pregnant from the Holy Spirit. At that time, an engagement was a waiting season to prove faithfulness to God and each other in purity. The couple would be committed to each other as husband and wife although not yet living together. The marriage wouldn't be consummated until after this season. This engagement season was also the season of the miracle from God.



DIGGING DEEPER GOD'S SIGN

In Isaiah 7:10-11, God told Ahaz to ask for a sign because He wanted to strengthen Ahaz's faith in Him. Since Ahaz refused to ask for a sign (v. 12), the entire house of David was under the threat of destruction because of Ahaz's lack of faith. Therefore God gave the sign through Isaiah. God promised the house of David that "the" virgin would conceive (v. 14). Isaiah's use of the word "the" indicates that God had shown him a particular virgin (Mary) who would conceive. The word "virgin" is translated *almah* in Hebrew and *parthenos* in Greek. *Almah* usually means "a young woman who is not sexually active" (Gen. 24:43; Ex. 2:8). *Parthenos* means "a young woman," usually one who is sexually inexperienced. Isaiah 7 is referring to a young woman with no sexual experience. God gave a sign that only He could've done.

How does this sign from God continue to impact the lives of believers today?

Mary's divine pregnancy changed Joseph's plans, but Joseph's actions were commendable. He planned a respectful, secret divorce, thinking she has been unfaithful. Surely Joseph's heart was broken. But his love for Mary and his righteousness drove his actions (even though the Old Testament law allowed for a public stoning for adultery [Deut. 22:22-24]). Joseph chose not to create a public scandal by taking news of Mary's condition to the judges.

The situation had changed Joseph's plans, but didn't change his love for Mary or his desire to live righteously. Joseph took the righteous path and sought to quietly move on from this painful chapter of his life. Joseph thought that divorcing Mary quietly would be the most loving action he could take in this circumstance. But as we shall see, God intervened with a far greater and more righteous approach.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES?

Our Certainty of a Savior //

Matthew 1:20-25

As Joseph considered what he thought to be the best option—divorce—God sent an angel to give him a change in plans. Sometimes God tells us to adjust our plans, not because they are bad, but because they aren't the best. God often has a better plan that is known to Him, but not to us. That was the case for Joseph, "an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream" (v. 20) to reveal the truth of Mary's situation: "What has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (v. 20).

As Joseph listened to the description of the Messiah as the One who would "save his people from their sins" (v. 21), he must have realized that this was God's plan. As a faithful man from the house of David (Matt. 1:16), he knew and likely recalled the prophecy Matthew

now quoted from Isaiah 7:14: "See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel," which is translated "God is with us."

The last words of verse 23 stand out: "God is with us." While "Jesus" is the earthly name that was given to Christ (Luke 1:31), Immanuel is a better description. Immanuel describes what God did in sending Jesus. God's presence was intimately with His people. This name of Christ reminds us of the unfailing promise of God in Hebrews 13:5: "I will never leave you or abandon you."

WHAT FEELINGS DO YOU GET WHEN YOU READ THE MEANING OF THE NAME "IMMANUEL"?

By the time of Jesus' birth, the Jewish people had been longing for the Messiah. The coming Messiah would fulfill the promises made throughout the Scriptures: promises of a kingdom filled with victory, joy, prosperity, deliverance from enemies, hatred, and pain. God's promise embedded in the name Immanuel would take them—and us—far beyond things we would receive from His hand. It promises the gift of His presence. When Jesus is with us, He is all we need. Nothing is more powerful in our lives than the presence of God.



THE POINT: JESUS IS IMMANUEL—GOD WITH US.

“God with us” means that we will receive incredible blessings from God, but none will be greater than the blessing of God’s presence. In our trouble-filled world and trial-filled days, it’s a blessing to know that the One true God is right here with us. Sometimes, because of our circumstances, we may feel like God is not with us. That’s when we must take God at His word and trust His presence. Jesus’ birth proves that God is with us.

Joseph was probably concerned about the opinions of those around him and confused about how this pregnancy happened. He must’ve been overwhelmed by the responsibility that the Lord had given to him and Mary. Joseph was reassured that the Lord was with him, and more importantly, the long-awaited Messiah at last was now coming into the world. God kept His promise from centuries earlier, and Jesus was born of a virgin. When we place our faith in Jesus who came to us, God is with us—and He will be with us forever.

HOW DOES THE WAY GOD DEALT WITH JOSEPH MAKE YOU APPRECIATE THE FACT THAT GOD IS WITH YOU?

DID YOU KNOW?

The coming Messiah was mentioned in the Old Testament. These Old Testament prophecies point to Jesus. “I see him, but not now; I perceive him, but not near. A star will come from Jacob, and a scepter will arise from Israel” (Num. 24:17). Genesis 22:18 tells us that through Abraham’s offspring “all nations on earth will be blessed.” Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise. He is from the line of King David. “The days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land ... This is the name by which he will be called: the LORD our righteous savior” (Jer. 23:5-6). The New Testament revealed the fulfillment of the Deliverer. Despite all we endure, we are sure that God loves us because He provided His promised Messiah, and He will keep all of His promises.

What difference does it make knowing that the birth, life, and ministry of Jesus was foretold in the Old Testament?

LIVE IT

How has “God with us” changed your life?

The world’s religions attempt to explain God and how we can reach Him. But these religions fall short because humanity falls short; we can’t reach God on our own. Christianity reveals a wholly different approach: God reached out to us. In Jesus Christ, God came to earth to show us who God is and to provide a way back to our Creator. Because of Jesus, we’re confident that God is with us.

+ + +

- **Ask for strength.** This week, pray and reflect on your faith in God. When He tells you something, do you believe Him? If not, ask God to forgive you and to help you to have a stronger faith in Him.
- **Talk about God.** Share with others who are struggling with their faith what God’s presence in your life means to you.
- **Share the birth of Christ.** This week, pray that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you someone who needs to know that God is with them and then share the miracle of the birth of Jesus with them.

DAILY READINGS

1. READ THE SIGN // ISAIAH 7:14

My daughter is turning 16 and has to take her driver's license test. The test is going to include a road sign examination. She will have to look at various signs and tell the examiner what the signs mean. God offered Ahaz, the king of Judah, a sign of deliverance. Ahaz refused to accept the sign God was offering to him. God, as promised, gave a sign anyway that the Messiah (Jesus) would be born. As Christians, we are to recognize that Jesus was born of a virgin, was crucified, died, and was resurrected to save us from our sins and give us eternal life. God gave us a sign—Jesus—just as He promised.

Thanks to Jesus we have victory over sin.

2. BABY BLESSING // MATTHEW 1:18

The birth of a baby is one of the greatest blessings parents can have. The doctor told my husband and me that I was a high risk pregnancy due to being over 35. He explained that women are born with all the eggs they will ever need and as we get older so do the eggs. He asked me if I wanted to have a special test called an amniocentesis to see if our baby had any chromosomal abnormalities. We decided against the test because our baby was a blessing from God and her chromosomes were perfect in His sight. I give God praise for our daughter. Mary gave God praise for choosing her to be the mother of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

Praise God today for blessing us with Christ.

3. STONE SURVIVOR // DEUTERONOMY 22:23-24

According to the law of Moses, if a young virgin woman is engaged and has a sexual encounter with another man, both are guilty. The two of them must be taken out of the gate of the city and stoned to death. Thus according to the law, Joseph could have had Mary stoned to death. But even before the angel spoke to Joseph he did not choose the law over love. He chose the righteous and compassionate

route of a secret divorce. Most people would have wanted revenge against Mary because of what they perceived as betrayal. However, Mary did not betray Joseph. She was part of God's salvation plan for us.

We can trust God who did not allow the law to uproot His plan of salvation.

4. BLIND SIGHT // ISAIAH 9:1-3

Stevie Wonder was born six weeks premature with an eye disorder called retinopathy of prematurity caused by abnormal blood vessels throughout the retina. It worsened when he was overexposed to oxygen while in an incubator leaving him blind. Despite his blindness he had hope that he could be successful. As a child, he told his mother not to worry about his blindness because he was happy. Stevie taught himself to play multiple instruments before age ten. His blindness didn't cause him to lose hope. Judah was distressed in darkness. Isaiah prophesied about the light of Jesus that God promised Judah. God offered them hope in the darkness. Jesus is our hope, and no darkness can cause us to lose that hope.

When we see lights, let us remember Christ.

5. FOLLOW THE LIGHT // NUMBERS 9:15-23

During an eye exam the eye doctor tells his patients to follow the light to make sure their eyes can track the light properly and do not have any dysfunction in the eye muscles. God guided the Israelites by a cloud during their wilderness journey. It was a visual representation of God's presence. This is often referred to as the "Shekinah glory" (Ex. 40:35). The glory of God led the Israelites. The cloud continuously covered the tabernacle and had the appearance of fire. It lifted when the Israelites journeyed to a new location. It's movement was a visual sign of God's guidance. The Israelites moved in response to God's instruction. Jesus is the light of the world, and He desires that we follow Him.

Follow Jesus where He leads.