



Isaiah 7:14

God with Us

The Hebrew prophets went from one crisis to another. They lived on the heels of political intrigue. One of the greatest statesmen and spokesman for God during that chaotic age was Isaiah.

Scholars suggest that perhaps as much as twenty years rapidly passes between Isaiah chapters six and seven. The sixteen year reign of Jotham, the son of Uzziah of Judah, has passed without a word from Isaiah. Then we jump from the death of King Uzziah, at the beginning of Jotham's reign to his son, King Ahaz. With a quick stroke of the pen Isaiah takes us from the long righteous reign of Uzziah to his idolatrous grandson who sacrificed his own son to a pagan god of Molech. The kingdom of David had sunk to the condition of faithless, godless pagans.

Politically things were as bad as they were spiritually. Assyria was the superpower who threatened its neighbors. Judah's two neighbors to the north were threatening Ahaz, so he hired the king of Assyria to protect him. Ahaz sacked the Temple in Jerusalem of all the vessels of silver and gold and sent them to the king of Assyria as payment for his protection. He played the superpower against the neighboring states. Ahaz forgot that when you give a mouse a piece of cheese he then wants the whole glass of milk.

The Syro-Ephraimitic war in 735 B.C. involved this coalition with the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Syria against Assyria. King Jotham of Judah continued his father's policy of independence and steadfastly refused to join in the coalition against Assyria. At this time Egypt tried to make a bid for power. However, in 735 Israel and Syria staged an attack on Judah and were within three days of entering the land of Judah. This sent King Ahaz and his cabinet into panic (Isaiah 7:1-2). Ahaz's heart "and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind." Psychological war had done its trick. The national leadership was in a panic.

What does Yahweh have to say in a time of crisis?

The LORD God is Sovereign (vv. 3-9)

The LORD sent His spokesman to King Ahaz (v. 3ff). Isaiah is commanded to take his son Shear-jashub with him out of the city to the water reservoir to meet Ahaz who is inspecting the water supply in preparation for the siege of the city by Israel and Syria. Jerusalem didn't have a natural source of water, so it had to be brought in and stored.

There is a beautiful play on words in Isaiah that reinforces his message. His name means "Yahweh is salvation," or "Salvation of the LORD." Shear —

name means "Yahweh is salvation," or "Salvation of the LORD." Shear – jashub means, "a remnant shall return." The kid doesn't say a word. He just accompanies his father to the end of the conduit at the Fuller's Field. His name says it all. Only "a remnant shall return" if you do not take Yahweh at His word and believe Him for your salvation. Let Yahweh be your salvation and a remnant will return.

God's message to Ahaz and his royal cabinet is you have nothing to fear, therefore trust in the LORD. Take care, and be calm, have no fear and do not be fainthearted because these two pieces of sticks have already burned out and are just a lot of smoke. Syria and Israel are nothing more than two burned out sticks and there is not enough life left in them to flame up again. They are just a trickle of smoke, like burned out stumps. They are literally "fire stirrers." They are powerless.

Historically, within 65 years the Northern Kingdom of Israel would be taken captive and Syria would be destroyed by Assyria (2 Kings 15:29; 16:9). It took place just as God said it would. Isaiah's sarcasm comes alive when he doesn't even mention the name of Pekah, but the son of Remaliah, "the son of nobody" (v. 4). The name of the puppet king they had planned to install was the son of Tabeel, meaning "good for nothing" (v. 6). Out of disrespect, Isaiah doesn't even mention the guys' names. Don't panic, God is sovereign. Don't waste your time and energy on these idle threats from nobodies.

I think one of the reasons God sent Isaiah to meet Ahaz at the laundryman's field was so there would witnesses to the encounter. Since there was plenty of water available in that spot it may have been a gathering place where people in Jerusalem came to wash their clothes. Their ears must have burned, too, as they heard the prophet saying if Judah believed Yahweh, they had a future, if not their doom was sealed. They will endure only if they continue in faith; otherwise they will not be established.

King Ahaz already had his mind made up. He clung to his stubborn unbelief (2 Kings 16:7-8).

Ask for a sign (vv. 10-17)

God told Ahaz to choose a sign as evidence that the message is true. Make it as difficult as you like. "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven" (v. 11). Ask for a miracle, Ahaz. It will be a pledge of divine certainty. It will prove the Word of God. The king hasn't openly denied the God of his father David at this time. He is even granted the liberty of penetrating as deeply as he wished into the providence of God. Go ahead, Ahaz, ask Him! What will it be? Remember that God is the One who is graciously giving Ahaz the opportunity to ask for anything! What would you have asked for? How would you have responded to the invitation?

Ahaz would not ask, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" (v. 12).

His response is evidence of pious unbelief. The king knows that if he did choose a sign and the LORD demonstrated Himself he would be obligated to believe and obey Him. Ahaz did not want to be accountable to God. Even in our day, God has revealed Himself with undeniable signs and testimonies and still men do not believe because they will not. "I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord," is a mask for stubborn unbelief.

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Probably by now every person stopped what he was doing and silence fell over the scene. You could have heard Sprint's pin drop in dead silence as the prophet's blood began to boil.

"Listen now, O house of David!" Isaiah shouts. "Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?"

When God proposes a sign, it is not a test. It is an opportunity and privilege to obey, and when we obey we experience God.

Therefore, since Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, God went ahead and gave him one. It was God sized. It was not a Mickey Mouse sign.

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 (v. 14).

Huh. What did he say? No doubt, Ahaz wishes to this day he had gone ahead and asked something, anything from the LORD.

Almah is the Hebrew word here and it signifies a marriageable young lady of unblemished character. A woman with such a reputation would be classified as a virgin. The best translation for *almah* is "virgin" with the alternate reading "young woman" or "maiden" in the margin. She is a young woman or maiden with the reputation of being a virgin. She didn't have to blush when the subject came up. She had kept herself pure. Both the usage and context support our translating "virgin" in this passage. In the context of God's message to Ahaz we are led to expect something very unusual. It would not be unusual for a maiden to conceive. However, for a virgin to conceive would fulfill the necessary meaning of the sign in the context of chapter seven. This sign would be a tremendous encouragement to the faith of the remnant of Israel. It would also bring judgment and condemnation to the unfaithful in David's household. Thus, judgment and salvation are evident in the promised sign.

There is another Hebrew word for virgin, *bethulah*, signifying a young maiden living in seclusion in her parent's house and still a long way from matrimony. However, *almah* would fit our context better meaning a marriageable young lady of unblemished character or reputation. It is true she is a young woman or maiden, but that is not the comprehensive understanding of the word. She is a young woman of marriageable age who has never known a man sexually.

God with Us

If you have a problem with the "virgin" conceiving and bearing a child that should be nothing in comparison to the thought of Immanuel –God with us in the flesh. That is the greatest feat. How else could the "Word become flesh and dwell among us" than by means of a virgin becoming pregnant and bearing a son? God in the flesh means "God with us." The child to be born will be called Immanuel; therefore, the translation "virgin" is demanded in the sentence. It is nothing short of a miracle, and that is exactly where the problem lies with those who want to reject "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14. If you do not want to believe in miracles then you will have a problem with this sign to Ahaz.

The child called Immanuel will be a special child and will embody the truth, "God with us." This special child born of a virgin will be God among His people. Only as we look into His face, listen to His voice and see Him in action do we know what God is really like (Hebrews 1:1-3).

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All of Christianity rests upon the foundation of this prophecy in Isaiah chapter seven. God meant the sign to be earth shaking. God meant it to be such a sign that when it was actually fulfilled in history men would stand back and say, I saw God do it! It is something only God can do.

The sign of Immanuel, "God with us," is the coming of the child of a virgin. That sign was fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Nothing in history approaches the mystery, beauty and glory of the LORD God coming to be with His people.

God sent Gabriel to Mary and said, "Behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him, Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

Mary got rather upset with the angel. "How can this be, since I am a virgin," she demanded (Luke 1:34). There is no question about the Greek word she used. The word for "virgin" always means a marriageable young woman who had preserved the purity of her body. She kept herself sexually pure. If the child were illegitimate it could not be a sign. The whole context of the Bible rules it out. If the birth was out of the ordinary, and unusual because she was a virgin then it is of such a magnitude that God has come to be with His people and deal with their sins. There is only one person in history of whom it can be said that He was God incarnate, God with His people, and that is Jesus Christ. The very presence of this child, born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem can not be applied to anyone else. Jesus the Christ is the Son of the Virgin and the Mighty God.

The deity and preexistence of Christ demanded this miraculous conception and Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ.

"And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God. . . For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:35, 37).

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. . . . And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sin. . . . And Joseph . . . kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus" (Matthew 1:18-25, *et passim*; cf. Luke 2:1-24). They named Him "Jesus." They named Him after His Father! They called Him Joshua. The original full form is Jehoshua, meaning "Yahweh our salvation," "Yahweh saves," "Yahweh's salvation."

"God with us." Now we know what He is like. This could only be true when the Word became flesh and dwelt among His people in the person of the Anointed of God. Oh, the wonder of wonder, God in the corporeal self-manifestation to His people. He is a super-human person. He is the incarnation of deity. This coming child would be God among His people. John 1:1-3, 18, 18; 14:14-20; Colossians 2:9-10;

The godly Charles Wesley wrote:

Offspring of a Virgin's womb;
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th' incarnate Deity.

Hail th' incarnate Deity.

If you have never put your faith in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, please take a few moments to reflect over [A Free Gift for You](#). It is our prayer that you will come to know Him as your Savior.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

Title: Isaiah 7:14 God with Us

Series: [Christ in the Old Testament](#)

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