

Foretold

IMMANUEL: GOD WITH US

PART 4

GOD WITH US

READ ISAIAH 7:14 AND MATTHEW 1:23

INTRODUCTION

Names are so important to us. We feel connected and valued when others know and remember our name. Names can also tell us something about the significance in the events surrounding the naming. In the Bible, the meaning behind names are of huge importance. The name Immanuel (im-ma-nu-AIL) first appears in Isaiah 7:14 as part of a prophetic word that Isaiah spoke to King Ahaz of Judah (the southern kingdom) at a time when Syria and Israel (the northern kingdom) had formed a coalition against Assyria, the region's greatest power. They wanted Judah to join their uprising. The prophet Isaiah counseled Ahaz to trust in the Lord rather than to appeal to Assyria for help against Syria and Israel, who were threatening to invade Judah for refusing to join them. Then he invited Ahaz to ask the Lord for a sign to confirm the prophetic word, but the unfaithful king refused, having already decided to place his trust not in the Lord but in Assyria. In response to Ahaz's refusal to trust God, Isaiah proclaimed:

Isaiah 7:13-14

13 Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Shortly after that Syria and Israel were soundly defeated, exactly as Isaiah had prophesied. Many years later the southern kingdom of Judah was destroyed by Babylon, its people taken captive.

Matthew's Gospel recalls Isaiah's prophecy, applying it to the child who would be born of Mary. The sign given hundreds of years earlier to a renegade king was meant for all God's people. In Jesus, God would act in a unique way, becoming a man to save the world not from the outside, but from the inside. Immanuel,

God with us, to rescue, redeem, and restore our relationship with Him. The truth of Christ's presence with us is so important that Matthew begins and ends his Gospel with the promises that God is with us.

Matthew 28:20

20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does this title of Jesus reveal about His nature?
2. How have you experienced Immanuel — God being with you, in your life?
3. Read Matthew 1:23 and Matthew 28:20. Why do you think Matthew placed “God with us” as bookends to his gospel account?
4. How would your life be different if you began and ended each day with the firm belief that God is with you?
5. We believe that we are to be like Jesus. How can you be more like Jesus in the relationships you have in your life?

WRAP UP

More than a name, Emmanuel is a declaration of heaven meeting Earth: God with us in despair, struggle, and brokenness. At Christmas, God came to redeem people in need of a Savior and light the darkness with His love. As we remember and celebrate His coming, Jesus' followers can live out His holy, loving presence into a broken world.