

Isaiah 7:14

Christmas: God with us: Immanuel

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Introduction

- ❖ Christmas is celebrated each year all over the world. For many, it means celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Others just celebrate Christmas with their families and friends.
- ❖ Christians shouldn't overlook the importance of the celebration of Christmas, not only for the Christian church, but for the world as well. The celebration of Christmas by the church is also a sign of God in this world. It is a call to believe the faithfulness of God and his saving act in Jesus Christ for anyone who believes:
 - "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son" (Jn 3:16–18).
- ❖ Christmas is a sign of God's love for this world.
- ❖ Christmas is a sign of God's faithfulness and mercy.
- ❖ Christmas – God with us – Immanuel is a sign of hope for this world.
 - "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Jl 2:32).
- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Book of Isaiah. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a "stand-alone". You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

Context

❖ Context of Isaiah 7:14

<p>Isaiah 7:1-2; <i>Historical situation</i></p>	<p>“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.”</p>
<p>Isaiah 7:3-9; <i>First meeting of Isaiah and Ahaz</i></p>	<p>“Don’t fear these two kings. But, ‘if you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.’”</p>
<p>Isaiah 7:10-25; <i>Second meeting of Isaiah and Ahaz</i></p>	<p>“Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, ‘Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.’ But Ahaz said, ‘I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.’</p> <p>“Then Isaiah said, ‘Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also?</p> <p>Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right.</p> <p>But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.</p> <p>The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah—he will bring the king of Assyria.”</p> <p>“In that day the Lord will use a razor hired from beyond the River—the king of Assyria—to shave your head and the hair of your legs, and to take off your beards also.”</p>
<p>Isaiah 8</p>	<p>“The LORD said to me, ‘Take a large scroll and write on it with an ordinary pen: Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. And I will call in Uriah the priest and Zechariah son of Jeberekiah as reliable witnesses for me.’</p> <p>Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. And the LORD said to me, ‘Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. Before the boy knows how to say ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria.”</p>

	(...) “O Immanuel!” ¹ (...) “Here am I, and the children the Lord has given me. We are signs and symbols in Israel from the Lord Almighty, who dwells on Mount Zion” (8:18).
Isaiah 9:1-7 (verse 6)	“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Form and structure

- ❖ Two boys with prophetic names compared:²

Immanuel (Isa 7:14-16)	Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz (Isa 8:3, 4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, ❖ and will call him Immanuel. <p>He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings³ you dread will be laid waste.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. ❖ And the Lord said to me, “Name him Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Before the boy knows how to say ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria.”

¹ This is probably an exclamation.

² It is remarkable that the prophet Hosea got similar commands: “Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness” (Hos 1:3-11).

³ The kings of Damascus and of Samaria.

Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

Historical background of Isaiah 7:14

- ❖ Ahaz was king of Judah and the son and successor of Jotham. Ahaz was 20 when he became king of Judah and reigned for 16 years (2 Kings 16; 2 Chron 28).

Immediately upon his accession, Ahaz had to meet a coalition formed by northern Israel, under Pekah, and Damascus (Syria), under Rezin. (See also 2 Kings 15:37.) These kings wanted to force him to join them in opposing the Assyrians under king Tiglath-Pileser III.,⁴ who was threatening the Northern Kingdom. To protect himself, Ahaz called in the aid of the Assyrians. Tiglath-Pileser sacked Damascus and annexed Aram. The population of Aram was deported and Rezin executed (2 Kings 16:9). Tiglath-Pileser then attacked the Northern Kingdom and "took Ijon, Abel Beth Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, and Hazor. He took also Gilead and Galilee, including all the land of Naphtali, and deported the people to Assyria." Tiglath-Pileser records this act in one of his own inscriptions.⁵

Ahaz became a vassal king of the Assyrians, paying a huge amount of tribute. "Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came to him, but he gave him trouble instead of help. (...) In his time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the Lord. He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus, who had defeated him; for he thought, 'Since the gods of the kings of Aram have helped them, I will sacrifice to them so they will help me.' But they were his downfall and the downfall of all Israel" (2 Chron 28:20-23).

When king "Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, he saw an altar in Damascus and sent to the priest Uriah a sketch of the altar, with detailed plans for its construction. So Uriah the priest built an altar in accordance with all the plans that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus and finished it before King Ahaz returned. When the king came back from Damascus and saw the altar, he approached it and presented offerings on it. (...) The bronze altar that stood before the Lord he brought from the front of the temple—from between the new altar and the temple of the Lord—and put it on the north side of the new altar" (2 Kings 16:10-14).

Hermeneutical remark

- ❖ Isaiah gave to the king Ahaz a sign: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." This sign was given during the days of this king. The virgin was a princess, belonging to the royal family. She trusted the Lord. She became pregnant and called her son: 'Immanuel.'

⁴ Further information: Tiglath-Pileser III. (n.d.). Retrieved December 07, 2016, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiglath-Pileser_III

⁵ Pritchard, J. B. (1969, p. 269).

The boy grew up. “He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right. But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste” (Isa 7:15-16).

- The first part of this prophecy is pointing to the second part of the prophecies. The second part of the prophecy refers to the first meeting between Isaiah and king Ahaz. See for an overview the context.

A comparison between Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23

	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23
	“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”	“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel—which means, ‘God with us.’”
Historical Situation	King Ahaz vassal king of the King of Assyria.	King Herod vassal king of the Emperor of Rome.
The sign	King Ahaz didn’t want a sign from the Lord, because of his disbelief.	The religious leaders of Israel didn’t notice the sign God had given to them.
	God gave him a sign, the birth of Immanuel, the son of a young woman.	God gave them not only a sign, but Jesus as the “Immanuel.”

- ❖ This is a case of a double fulfillment. During the kingship of Ahaz, a boy had been born and he received the name Immanuel. And during the days of King Herod, a boy has been born and he received the name Jesus. He is “God with us.”

Verse 9

- ❖ Stand firm in your faith = “אמן”: hif: causative — 3. to **have trust in**, to **believe in**; *absolute to believe* (Ex 4:31; Isa 7:9; 28:16).⁶
 - “To believe! How fundamental and all-penetrating this concept is in Isaiah! It involves accepting as true the words which the prophet speaks and acting in accordance with those words. Credence and trust! These are what the prophet demands.”⁷

⁶ Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M. E. J., & Stamm, J. J. (1994–2000, p. 64).

⁷ Young, E. J. (2000, p.277).

Verse 14

- ❖ Sign = “אֹת”⁸: **sign**; sign confirming the truth of an earlier statement.⁸
- ❖ Virgin = “עַלְמָה”⁹: 1. a) **marriageable girl** (Gn 24:43; Ex 2:8; Ps 68:26), as a description of the beloved (Song 1:3; 6:8); b) a **girl who is able to be married** (Pr 30:19); c) a **young woman**: until the birth of her first child.⁹
 - Note that “**virgin**” doesn’t mean that she became pregnant due to a miraculous conception, without the involvement of a man. There is a difference between this virgin and Mary, the blessed mother of Jesus Christ.
- ❖ Immanuel = “עִמָּנוּאֵל”¹⁰: **Immanuēl** (*with us is God*) – name of the child, symbolizing the presence of God to deliver his people. “Immanuēl” in Isaiah 8:8, 10 is a declaration of trust and confidence, *with us is God!*¹⁰

Exposition

Verse 1-13¹¹

- ❖ The kings of Israel and Syria have formed an anti-Assyrian pact and are determined to force Judah to join them by deposing Ahaz and installing a loyal king in his place:
 - “Let us invade Judah; let us tear it apart and divide it among ourselves, and make the son of Tabeel king over it.” (Isa 7:6).
- ❖ Ahaz is terrified. He is panic-stricken in the face of the invasion by Syria and Israel (Isa 7:2) and by what will happen when he joins them against Assyria. He fears this strong military power. He decided to make a military and political alliance with Assyria. But Isaiah proclaims a radical alternative: forswear all alliances and trust wholly in the Lord (Isa 7:7–9).
 - “Have no fear of sudden disaster
or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked,
for the Lord will be your confidence
and will keep your foot from being snared” (Prov 3:25, 26).
 - And if God says “fear not,” there is nothing to fear.
 - Isaiah used vivid imagery to describe the powerlessness of these two kings and their armies.

⁸ Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M. E. J., & Stamm, J. J. (1994–2000, p.26).

⁹ Koehler, L., Baumgartner, W., Richardson, M. E. J., & Stamm, J. J. (1994–2000, p. 836).

¹⁰ Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977, p. 769).

¹¹ Webb, B. (1996, p. 61-62).

- At the same time, Ahaz received a severe warning: “If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all” (Isa 7:9).
 - “Only established men, those who have been brought into a believing condition, are able to believe, for faith is the fruit of constancy, stability and steadfastness, and these qualities are gifts of God alone.”¹²
- ❖ **“Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹‘Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights’”** (Isa 7:10).
 - This word of the Lord forces Ahaz to show what is in his mind. Where does he stand? Be honest and frank about your faith.
- ❖ In view of Ahaz’s refusal to do this (Isa 7:10, 11), Isaiah announced that Judah will soon be overrun and devastated by the same Assyria that Ahaz has foolishly decided to turn to for help (Isa 7:17–20).
- ❖ Ahaz has no faith in the Lord. He is not encouraged by the Word of the Lord. He despised the Lord when he said: **“I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.”**
 - This reaction of Ahaz reflects his fears and is a blunt refusal: **“I will not ask.”**
 - If I will ask the LORD for a sign, then I must recall my former decision to turn to Assyria for help. And I don’t want to do this.
 - He underscores this blunt refusal by saying: **“I will not put the LORD to the test.”** Implicitly he says: “The Assyrian army supported by their gods is stronger than my army and the LORD.”
 - His religious beliefs can be summarized as follows. The king of Assyria and his armies gained large military successes, therefore their gods must be very powerful.
 - A comparison between the faith of Ahaz and his son Hezekiah will illustrate this.

Ahaz (2 Chron 28:20-23)	“Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came to him, but he gave him trouble instead of help. (...) In his time of trouble king Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the Lord. He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus, who had defeated him; for he thought, ‘Since the gods of the kings of Aram have helped them, I will sacrifice to them so they will help me.’ But they were his downfall and the downfall of all Israel.”
Hezekiah (2 Chron 32:10–15)	“This is what Sennacherib king of Assyria says: On what are you basing your confidence, that you remain in Jerusalem under siege? When Hezekiah says, ‘The LORD our God will save us from the hand of the king of Assyria,’ he is misleading you, to let you die of hunger and thirst. Did not Hezekiah himself remove this god’s high places and altars, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, ‘You must worship before one altar and burn

¹² Young, E. J. (2000, p. 277).

	<p>sacrifices on it’?</p> <p>“Do you not know what I and my fathers have done to all the peoples of the other lands? Were the gods of those nations ever able to deliver their land from my hand? Who of all the gods of these nations that my fathers destroyed has been able to save his people from me? How then can your god deliver you from my hand? Now do not let Hezekiah deceive you and mislead you like this. Do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to deliver his people from my hand or the hand of my fathers. How much less will your god deliver you from my hand!”</p>
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- ❖ But he and the people will receive a sign from the Lord.

Verse 14

- ❖ There is a sharp contrast between the unbelief of Ahaz and the young woman (“virgin”) who named her firstborn Immanuel, “with us is God.”
 - Note also the contrast between “the gods of Aram” (2 Chron 28:23) and “with us is God.”
- ❖ This birth and the naming of the boy is a sign confirming the truth of the earlier prophecies.
 - “Yet this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “It will not take place, it will not happen” (Isa 7:7). Trust the LORD!
 - But, “if you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.”

Application

Verse 14

- ❖ One of the questions Christians should ask themselves is how much does the church rely on political alliances, support of presidents and governments, beside or instead of reliance upon and trust in the Lord.
 - The church must pray: “I (Paul) urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:1-4).

- And as it was true for king Ahaz: “If you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all” (Isa 7:9). The same is true for the church and for Christians today. If we don’t stand firm in our faith, we will not stand at all.
- ❖ The celebration of Christmas is a sign from God for Christians to confirm his promises and for this world.

God with us	
<i>Isaiah 7:14</i>	“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. ”
And the Son with us	
<i>Matthew 1:23</i>	“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel—which means, ‘ God with us. ’”
<i>Matthew 28:20</i>	“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
And the Holy Spirit with us	
<i>John 14:16</i>	“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever.”
God with us	
<i>Revelation 21:3, 4</i>	“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away’”.

- ❖ The reality of “God with us” is full of promises, which God has given in his Son Jesus Christ.
 - He will deliver us from sin and evil.
 - We will share in his grace and peace.
 - We will receive forgiveness of sins.
 - The Spirit will teach us his words. He will teach us the righteousness and mercy of God. We will see and understand his mighty acts in history, in the present and in the future.
 - We will be loved and become part of a loving and caring community of brothers and sisters.
 - This can be contrasted with the world surrounding us.
- ❖ And people will be convinced whenever the church proclaims the Gospel.

- “But if all prophecy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare **that God is really among you**” (1 Cor 14:24, 25).

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