

**ISAIAH HAD FORETOLD IT; JESUS HAS FULFILLED IT**  
**Sermon for Christmas Eve 2025**  
**Isaiah 7:10-14**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon tonight is our First Reading from before, Isaiah 7:10-14: **Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: <sup>11</sup>“Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” <sup>12</sup>But Ahaz said, “I shall not ask, and I shall not put the LORD to the test.” <sup>13</sup>Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? <sup>14</sup>Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

No other Old Testament book is quoted as often in the New Testament as the prophet Isaiah. This is because of the wide range of topics he covered and his repeated descriptions of the coming Messiah and His kingdom, which are fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Isaiah prophesies so often about the coming Messiah that some commentators call his prophecy the “Fifth Gospel.”

Tonight, we again hear Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. The gospel writer Matthew confirms this when he writes: “*All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us)*” (Matthew 1:22-23). Clearly, the birth of Jesus fulfils Isaiah’s Immanuel prophecy. Jesus is “*God with us*” in the most profound way. Isaiah had foretold it; Jesus has fulfilled it.

But there was also another “Immanuel - God with us” situation going on back at the time of Isaiah himself, some 700 years before Christ. When we find out a little more about that, we shall gain greater insight into what the birth of Christ means for us today.

Some 700 years before Christ was born, the nation of Israel had been divided into a northern and southern kingdom for almost 200 years. *The northern kingdom was called Israel, and the southern kingdom was Judah*. The king of the southern kingdom was Ahaz. Ahaz was a descendant of the house of David, from whom the line of kings descended.

Judah was pressured by Israel to join them in an alliance with Syria to withstand Assyria, which was seeking to expand its empire. The problem King Ahaz and Judah as a nation had was that if they didn’t want to join with Israel, then Israel and Syria could attack Judah, which they were on the verge of doing. So, the message of Israel and Syria to Judah was, “*If you won’t join with us in fighting against the Assyrians, then we shall come, and we’ll take you over.*”

As you can imagine, this worried Ahaz. A little before our text tonight, Isaiah wrote, “*The heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind*” (7:2). What should Ahaz do? Should he rely on a political alliance to hold off Assyria? But if he doesn’t, what will Israel and Syria do to him and his people? Ahaz seemed caught between a rock and a hard place.

In steps the prophet Isaiah, who has a word from the LORD for King Ahaz. It’s a word of assurance, but also a word of rebuke and a word of warning. Isaiah first tells Ahaz, “*Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint*” (7:4). Although Israel and Syria were pressuring King Ahaz, they would fail in their threat against him because the LORD God had said, “*It will not stand, and it*

*will not come to pass.*” Since these are the words of God and not just the pious wish of an optimistic prophet, Ahaz should listen. Ahaz, Isaiah said, the LORD God is in control, but “*If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all*” (7:7, 9). Remain steadfast and trust that what the LORD God says comes to pass.

Now the LORD had more to say to Ahaz, and that’s where our text picks it up. “**The LORD spoke to Ahaz: <sup>11</sup> Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.**” God did not remain silent. Through His prophet, the Lord offered the king one more opportunity to trust in Him.

Also note how Isaiah indicated that the LORD, even though Ahaz doubted, *still desired* to be the God of Ahaz: “**Ask a sign of the LORD your God...**” These words remind us of the Saviour’s words to Judas in Gethsemane. Judas was about to betray Jesus, yet how did Jesus address him? “*Friend, do what you came for*” (Matthew 26:50)—a last tender invitation. God commanded Ahaz to ask for *anything*; He invited the king to ask for a sign—a miracle. The king could prove the reliability of God’s Word by requesting anything at all. “**But Ahaz said, “I shall not ask, and I shall not put the LORD to the test.”**”

At first, it sounds like Ahaz is being pious by refusing to ask for a sign. This was a decisive moment! What happened decided the fate of Judah and the house of David for centuries. But Ahaz was not being pious. No, he was stubborn and said, “**I shall not ask.**”

Even when God invited him to ask, Ahaz said, “**I shall not.**”

Clearly, this showed that Ahaz *had no regard for the LORD*, for His prophet Isaiah, or for the promises of protection. Yet what makes the response of Ahaz so vile is that *he pretended to be God-fearing*. When God offered such a sign, it was an *insult* to refuse. Worse than an insult, it was arrogant for this king of Judah to tell the LORD that he did not need or want God’s promises. Ahaz’s rejection was symptomatic of the kingdom of Judah’s unbelief. That unbelief, like all unbelief, could have only one outcome—the judgment of the LORD.

So Isaiah continues: “**Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.**” Because Ahaz would not believe the word of the LORD, the LORD Himself would give Ahaz a sign to confirm what He’d been saying, which was that the threat of Israel and Syria would not stand. Thus, this sign would confirm it. “**The virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.**”

Now that in itself is not so remarkable. Women get pregnant and have sons all the time. Even the name “Immanuel” is not so strange. In Hebrew, it means “*God with us*,” and there are many names like that in the Old Testament, with “God” or “the Lord” built into the name. For example, Daniel means “God is my judge,” and Elijah means “my God is Yahweh.” So, not much of a definitive sign so far.

But if we read further, immediately in the words *after* our text, Isaiah continued by telling Ahaz that before the Child has reached a certain age, a young age, the threat now facing Judah, the threat that looks so ominous at the moment, will be gone. He says, “*He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted*” (Is. 7:15-16). The Lord was promising Ahaz that in short order—during the nine months and weaning process of a typical childbirth—He would deliver Judah from the two kings who had been threatening them. In fact, their subjects would be fully swept away by exile. Jerusalem will not be taken, and Judah will be spared. And that is *exactly* what happened. Israel and Syria failed in their plan against Judah and were defeated by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

But then, look out, Ahaz! Assyria would not stop with knocking off Israel and Syria, *but would be coming after Judah!* Like a mighty river overflowing its banks, Assyria would proceed farther south and eventually reach the walls of Jerusalem. And again, that is what came to pass. Assyria threatened

Jerusalem a few years later, and at that time, Isaiah had to counsel the next king of Judah, Hezekiah, to trust in the Lord rather than in political or military alliances. This time, Hezekiah heeded the word of Isaiah, and the threat was lifted again.

A hundred years later, though, another threat came along, and that was the Babylonians. They did take the people captive and took them as exiles to Babylon. You are familiar with the Advent hymn: “O come, O come, Immanuel.” The first three lines of that hymn go: “*O come, O come, Immanuel, And ransom captive Israel, That mourns in lonely exile here.*” Through these words, that hymn is alluding to the Babylonian Captivity. Transfer that to the church, to us, as we sit in this vale of tears and wait for the Lord to come and set us free, and ***that’s the connection on this Christmas Eve.***

Tonight, we are reminded to trust in the Lord, and not in any human measure of strength for our deliverance. God has us firmly in His hands. Psalm 146 teaches us, “*Do not trust in noble people, in a descendant of Adam, who cannot save! When his spirit departs, he will return to his earth. On that day his plans will perish. Blessed is the one who has the God of Jacob for his help! His hope is in the LORD, his God*” (v. 3-5).

“*Immanuel,*” “*God with us.*” God being with us is all we need. “*Immanuel.*” That is the word Ahaz should have heard and heeded. Now fast-forward to just months before the birth of Christ. There is a man named Joseph who, like Ahaz, seems stuck between a rock and a hard place. The woman he’s planning to marry, Mary, has turned up pregnant, and Joseph knows *he’s not the father*. So what can he do? He decides to break it off. Obviously, to him, she’s been fooling around with somebody else.

But such is not the case. The Lord comes with a word for Joseph. It’s a word of assurance. Mary has not been fooling around. She is still a virgin. She is pregnant in a unique, one-of-a-kind way by the Holy Spirit. Mary is part of the fulfilment of Isaiah’s Immanuel prophecy: “**Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.**”

This son that Mary will bear will be the ultimate “*God with us,*” the ultimate “*Immanuel.*” His name will be “Jesus,” meaning “Saviour,” “*for He will save His people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21). “Their sins.” That is the big threat facing people even today. It’s not Syria or Assyria or Babylon or an unfaithful fiancée, but sins, *our sins*, even to this day. That hasn’t changed. We still need saving. We still need deliverance. That’s what separates us from God. That’s what leads to death, the big death of eternal damnation. *Where are we going to look for help with that?*

Don’t pull an Ahaz. Don’t look for sources of help that cannot save or deliver. Only one can, and it is the Lord Himself, this “*Immanuel,*” this “*God with us.*” That’s Jesus, the son of Mary. He is God in the flesh come to save us. He has come to be with us, God with us, in our midst to save us.

Jesus, Immanuel, saves us from our sins. How? By offering Himself up as the sacrifice for our sins. This is why the Son of God had to be born in the flesh, to live as our brother and to fulfil all righteousness and to suffer and die in our stead, in place of sinners like us. Jesus has done this for us to save us! He is Immanuel, God with us, now risen from the dead and living and reigning to all eternity, who is coming back to rescue us from all evil and to raise us from the dead. *We have His word on it.* We have His name on it; His name placed upon us in Holy Baptism. We are secure in Him.

Dear friends, do you ever find yourself stuck between a rock and a hard place? Then remember — no threat can overpower you. No threat can shake you like trees in the wind. Trust in Jesus, Immanuel, God with us. Isaiah had foretold it; Jesus has fulfilled it. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.