

For Further Study

Read and meditate on the passage below:

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14).

These verses come from the collection of oracles attributed to Isaiah, the prophet of the 8th century. They come about a century after the reign of Joash and the deposition of Athaliah as queen of Judah. However, there are some strikingly similarities between the words of Isaiah and the circumstances from the history of Judah that hyperlink to the birth narratives of Jesus.

Notice that in the midst of a time of great peril, Isaiah gives a message of future hope. The word translated, “virgin,” actually speaks of a young woman. The New Testament writers will pick up on this and make the parallel with Mary, who was said to be without relations at the time of her pregnancy (Matthew 1:18). However, the Hebrew term does not specifically designate the woman to be a virgin. So this verse applies to the historical setting of the birth of Joash who was raised in the temple by Jehosheba and Jehoiada, the present setting of Isaiah and the birth of the coming king, Hezekiah, and the future birth of the Messianic King, Jesus.

In each of these cases, the child will serve as a representative of God. Immanuel means “God with us.” God is with us in the times of greatest despair and the times of greatest hope. We continue to lean on God in all of life’s circumstances.

Take some time to reflect on how you experience God both in times of trouble and in times of achievement. How do you see God with you now?

PRACTICE:
Reflect on God’s presence with you in your current situation.

