

Immanuel – Isaiah 7:14

Preparing For Christmas – Does it seem like it starts earlier and earlier? However, no one spent as long preparing for Christmas as God. In one sense, you can read the entire Old Testament as a story about preparing for Christmas. “*But, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under law...*” (Gal 4:4). One of the great preparations was the manner in which the Son of God would come.

The Text – *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*

Context of the Passage (Isaiah 7:10-17) – Ahaz was given a sign by Isaiah from God when he was facing an imminent invasion by the kings of Syria and Israel. The Lord instructed Ahaz that he had nothing to fear, but Ahaz refused to request a sign in some show of false-humility. A remnant would be saved, but to those who wouldn’t believe (as Ahaz apparently), this sign also was a sign of destruction (7:17).

Scripture’s Application of the Passage (Matt 1:23) – Matthew quotes this verse as fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. His name is Immanuel, which is translated “*God is with us.*” His name is Jesus, which is translated, “*God saves.*” The sign of the virgin is the same: God is going to deliver a remnant but destruction will come upon the unbelieving. Those who faithfully saw that God had been preparing for Christmas were able to meditate upon these scriptures and see what God was planning. Mary, contemplating her pregnancy in the light of OT prophesies would sing of this (Luke 1:51b-52). Simeon would also prophesy that Jesus was “*destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel*” (Luke 2:34).

The Story of the Seed of the Woman – This prophesy is one of many signs in the OT where God shows that He is going to do something miraculous for His people through a woman.

Enmity Between Seeds (Gen 3:15) – In the Garden, God promised that the seed of Eve would bruise the head of the serpent. Paul picks up on this language in Rom 16:20, “*and the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.*”

Abraham/Sarah – God promises to open a barren womb, bringing forth a son in order to fulfill a promise (Gen 12:2-3), which includes blessing for some and judgment for others. The story takes an interesting twist when Abraham tries to accomplish God’s promise himself by taking Hagar who conceives Ishmael. This is the false-covenant of self-justification (Gal 4:21-31). It is God who will bring forth the promise, who says, “*Is there anything too hard for the Lord?*” (Gen 18:14).

Hannah/Samuel (1 Sam 2) – The same story is given again; this time bringing forth the greatest of the Judges, Samuel, who will later anoint King David. God is bringing forth deliverers.

Mary/Jesus (Luke 1:26-38) – Mary understands as the angel comes to her and paraphrases the words of the Lord to Abraham, “*For with God nothing will be impossible*” (v37). Her song (vv 46-55) before Elizabeth alludes to the song of Hannah. But this time, two amazing miracles will supersede the foreshadowings of the OT.

First Miracle: Virgin Birth – God would not only bring forth from barrenness, He would bring forth from a virgin. He would do not only the improbable, but the impossible. Virginity was not required because sexual union was in any way defiled in marriage (Heb 13:4) as many church fathers have wrongly taught. Virginity proved that this conception was of the Holy Spirit. The Man was truly from heaven and not of the earth. Born of a woman, Jesus took on the nature of a man in the way all natural babies do with regard to their mother. Mary was not a surrogate mother for a special baby. She truly was the mother of Jesus. And so Jesus is fully man.

Second Miracle: Immanuel, God-With-Us – But from this woman, the second Person of the Trinity added finitude, humanity, to Himself. He did not subtract from Himself, but added flesh, and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Jesus was fully and completely God, losing none of His Godhead in the process. He remains fully man and fully God, “*...so that the two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion...*(WCF 8.2)”

Sign/Fulfillment – See all that is therefore promised in Isaiah 7:14. God is giving the sign. God is sending a deliverer. A virgin birth will prove that only God is doing this. But He is not only sending a deliverer. He is sending Himself to deliver His people, to save His people from their sins.

The Sign Is Still Declared – The sign of God’s preparation for Christmas, and for the fulfillment of it, is all around us. When the sign is received in faith, it is a sign that *God is with us*, and that God saves. When the sign is rejected, refused, twisted in meaning, or with false-humility set aside, it is a sign that *God is with us*, and that great judgment is going to fall.

Notes for Little Saints

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Read Isaiah 7:14 – *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.*

This was written hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Mary is told this will happen to her in Luke 1:26-38. Read that story as well.

So, how long was God preparing for Christmas?

How is the story of Sarah having a baby like the story of Mary?

How is the story of Hannah having a baby like the story of Mary?

How is the story of Mary having a baby different? Her Son is different? How?

Some would say the Old Testament is a story about the failure of God's people to follow Him and the New Testament is a story about God fixing that. What would be a better way to see the relationship between the story of the Old Testament and the New?