

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 9:6

Favorite verses that we love to read in anticipation of Christmas
Favorites because they invite us to look forward to the coming of the Christ child
They are deep with meaning as we read them
A virgin
Gives birth to Immanuel “God with us”
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace = God
But I dare say that is because we have the rest of the story—the whole Bible
We know the story of Jesus’ birth and life

What was happening at the time that these words were written?

Isaiah 7—Ahaz was the King of Judah—the southern kingdom

Jerusalem is surrounded by hostile armies

Therefore, there is a shortage of water

King Ahaz is consumed with anxiety and fear as Isaiah comes to him with a message from God

Isaiah’s message is that faithful trust in Yahweh is required in order to be safe in this world

God speaks to Ahaz and tells him that he can ask for a sign of God’s presence—Ahaz refuses

We pick up the story in verse 14

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

It is an affirmation that God is present with Jerusalem

While we see it as a promise of baby Jesus, born to the virgin Mary

The mother and child must be seen as a sign to Ahaz or the passage makes no sense

It was a promise to Ahaz of God’s presence with them

A young woman in the kingdom of Ahaz will give birth to a son

Before he is of age, the countries attacking you will have been defeated

It is a call to trust God in this time of trial and rebukes the king’s lack of trust

The promise of a Messiah is a secondary indication of God’s presence with us

Isaiah 8—The prophet continues with a message that there will be great suffering at the hand of Assyria

He reminds them that they did not follow God’s leading—and they bear the consequences

A great distress and darkness will cover the land

Isaiah 9—This is an indication that there will be a new king in Jerusalem

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness--on them light has shined... For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. Isaiah 9:2, 6-7

There will be a radical transformation and darkness will turn to light; war will give way to peace

The message of the birth of a child probably refers to a new king—likely Hezekiah

Terms used in crowning the king—royal titles of Wonderful Counselor - Prince of Peace

The government of this new king would be marked by justice

The promise that we see of a coming of the Messiah is a secondary interpretation

In all of this, there is a promise that if they will follow God and trust God's leadings, there is hope
But the people and the kings persist in going their own way and in forming unholy alliances
The result of not trusting God and following military strategies of alliance fail them miserably
However, in the midst of this, there is a promise that God is with them + will show them the way

Today, the darkness persists all around us

It seems that nary a week goes by without further darkness and destruction

It presents itself as political, but the darkness is actually spiritual

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Ephesians 6:12 KJV

This darkness impacts us all

This week the Senate passed a tax bill which rewards the wealthy and corporations

At the expense of the poor and middle classes

It puts at jeopardy the social programs which sustain those who need help

All while homelessness and poverty increase

Sexual predation reports continue to mount

Findings in the involvement of Russia in American politics

North Korea and United States have increasing tension

Problems in the Middle East

Yet, it was in the middle of this darkness that the light began to shine

We take hope, not in our ability to do it right or military power or congressional action

We stop and Listen for the still, small voice

We look for and find the Light

We remember that this is why Jesus came to earth—to shine a Light in the darkness!

Close by listening to "Immanuel" by Michael Card (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mSEqXbnOrQU>)