The Hope **November 30, 2025**

Isaiah 7:10-17
10 Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, 11 Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. 12 But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. 13 Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? 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. 15 He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. 16 For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted. 17 The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on your ancestral house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah — the king of Assyria" (NRSV).

Today's Scripture comes from a well-known prophecy about Immanuel. Immanuel means "God with us," and this simple phrase carries profound meaning for us today. To understand this prophecy, we need to understand the context. Around 735 BC, the kingdom of Judah faced a serious political crisis. The threat was Assyria, an immediate and terrifying danger. Assyria was sweeping through the region with extreme brutality, conquering nation after nation. In response to this threat, Syria and Israel formed an alliance to stand against Assyria. But they needed more support, so they threatened to attack Jerusalem to force Judah into joining them against Assyria. It was a desperate time, and the people of Judah were terrified.

Unfortunately, Judah was led by King Ahaz, who was, frankly, a bad king. He failed politically because he failed spiritually. Ahaz had rejected God and was plagued with idolatry. He tried to solve his problems through political deals rather than through faith and obedience to God. When Assyria threatened the region, Ahaz was terrified and panicked. Instead of trusting God and accepting God's reassurance, he asked Assyria for help. He chose to become a vassal of Assyria, as we read in 2 Kings 16. The prophet Isaiah warned against this alliance. Becoming dependent on Assyria brought heavy tribute payments. The foreign influence brought further spiritual compromise. The failure to follow divine guidance put Judah under Assyria's control. This is a principle we see repeated throughout Scripture: failure to follow divine guidance leads to failure.

In the midst of this crisis, God sends Isaiah to reassure King Ahaz. The message was clear: these enemies will not succeed. God even tells Ahaz to ask for a sign—if he needs proof, he can ask for anything he wants. But Ahaz refuses. He acts pious, saying he won't test God. But the reality is that he doesn't trust God. Isaiah calls him out for this false piety and announces that God will give a sign anyway. Here is the sign: A young woman will conceive and bear a son, and he will be called Immanuel—God with us. This child is coming in the future, and before that child grows old enough to know right from wrong, the two enemy kingdoms that Ahaz fears will be gone.

The Old Testament lesson here is about consequences—specifically, the consequence of not listening to the word of God. Despite the specific warning from the prophet Isaiah, Ahaz denied God, and hard days came as a result. Judah lost divine protection. Ahaz refused to trust God and instead depended on a foreign power. He paid a large sum of silver and gold, even sending Temple treasures to forge an alliance with

Assyria. Judah became a vassal state, dependent on Assyria for protection. This political decision led to spiritual decline. The purity of the Israelite faith was diluted through foreign idolatry. Ahaz blended Assyrian religious practices with the worship of God. He traveled to Damascus, saw an Assyrian altar, and ordered a replica to be built in Jerusalem. This foreign altar replaced the bronze altar of the Temple, and Ahaz began offering sacrifices to this new altar. Ahaz desecrated the Temple, removing sacred items and setting up altars to foreign gods. The theological consequence was severe: the famous "Immanuel" prophecy, given as a sign of God's presence and protection, could not be fully experienced by Judah because of Ahaz's unbelief. The warning is clear: there is danger in trusting human power over divine promises.

The New Testament interprets this promise as fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Matthew directly quotes Isaiah 7:14, explaining that everything surrounding the birth of Jesus took place to fulfill this word: "The virgin will birth a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—God with us. The doctrine of the virgin birth carries significance as a miraculous sign from the Old Testament prophecy. Immanuel represents God's presence—God is with us in the flesh.

The contemporary lesson for us is found in how the text compares to our society today. We see similar consequences from a decline in faith. The rejection of biblical values and the rise of secularism means that society loses its moral code. Fragmentation continues from the loss of shared ethical foundations and discipline. When we place our dependence on flawed human systems—trusting in military might, the economy, or money—and put our faith in anything other than putting God first to solve our problems, the result is disillusionment, addiction, consumerism, vulnerability to manipulation, and instability. Contemporary society shows increased polarization, distrust in institutions, and swings toward authoritarianism or anarchy. The result is social unrest, erosion of community, and loss of hope. We see broken relationships and isolation. Alienation from God leads to broken covenants and national decline, broken families, and declining mental health. People seek meaning in radical ideologies. Society ignores calls for repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual renewal. The result is cycles of crisis without transformation. Society repeats the same mistakes because people repeat the same mistakes.

This passage carries a powerful message of trust and faithfulness. When facing a critical moment, the word of God offers assurance: God is with you. In the midst of uncertainty, ask yourself—wherever you are in your struggles of life—will you trust God's guidance over human solutions? Stay grounded in worship, Bible study, prayer, and Christian fellowship. Jesus is called Immanuel because of its meaning: God with us. That is the truth that needs to sink in—God is with you. In your uncertainty, your struggles, and your triumphs, God is with you. The most repetitive biblical lesson is this: failure to follow divine guidance leads to failure in life. Regardless of the setting—whether it's Old Testament Judah, as in today's Scripture, or other biblical heroes and the nation of Israel, or the nations of history and contemporary society—this lesson holds true. This lesson includes the church, your family, and yourself personally. Failure to follow divine guidance leads to failure in your life. If you have not done so, I encourage you to ask God to take control of your life today.