

Immanuel

Isaiah 7.1-17

We focus on the wonderful sign that God gave through Isaiah when he prophesied that a virgin would conceive and bear a son named Immanuel ('God with us'). We study the background, and especially the choice King Ahaz was given when the country of Judah was threatened with invasion: to trust in the promises of God for protection or to form an alliance with a superpower.

When he chose the latter course and refused the sign offered by God, God gave the sign of Immanuel – a sign which was never seen by Ahaz and his people but which was fulfilled hundreds of years later in the birth of Jesus.

It was most important for Matthew in his gospel to guard this truth of the virgin birth from the slurs that Jesus's unbelieving contemporaries threw at him. And unlike Ahaz, Joseph – also a man descended from King David – chose to trust God in the most difficult of circumstances. Joseph's comfort in a situation where he would face ridicule and suspicion would have been in the name of the child, Immanuel – God with us. And for us, whatever our circumstances, the same is true.