

Isaiah OT651
Professor Russel Mack
Jay Harper

What, if anything, troubled you about what you studied this week?

The interpretation of the sign of Immanuel (Isaiah 7:10-25) and how it could be interpreted differently in the light of Jesus' birth was completely foreign to how I thought about this passage. According to Matthew 1:23, this was the only interpretation that fit Isaiah 7:10-25. But upon further review, this Immanuel according to Isaiah 7:16 says, "But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid to waste." The two kings Isaiah is referring to are Syria and Israel. According to Oswalt the sign of a virgin has provoked endless controversy, largely because of Matthew's identification of its fulfillment in Christ (Matt. 1:23). On the surface, the sign seems to be that before a child conceived at the time of the saying is twelve years of age, the two nations that so frighten the house of David will be destroyed (7:16).¹ Again Oswalt gives three compelling arguments concerning the name Immanuel. First, there seems to be nothing remarkable about the sign that God gives. Secondly, the word used for women is not normal and the LXX translates the word 'virgin' which is a mystery. Third, the name is strange because there's no historical relevance that is clear whereas there is a direct relevance in the other two children mentioned (Isa. 7:3, 8:3). Oswalt sentiment is the sign that was given had a single meaning but a double significance.

¹ John N. Oswalt, "The NIV Application Commentary: Isaiah, Grand Rapids, MI 2003 p. 139

One was positive and the other was negative. First, God is with them. Why should they fear Syria and Israel? Many times, we make bad decisions out of fear. Faith in God is always a step in the unknown. People often say, "If I saw the miracles of the Old Testament I would believe". That's not true because people are never saved by miracles but by faith in Jehovah in the Old Testament or faith in Jesus Christ today! It's true that Immanuel is with us today. The wonder of Christmas is that God is with us. Col 1:15 says, 'He is the image of the invisible God'. I John 5:19 says, 'even his Son Jesus Christ, this is the true God and eternal life'. Heb 1:8 says, 'But unto the Son he (God) saith, thy throne O God is forever and ever a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom' and Matthew 1:23 says 'a virgin shall bring forth a child'. While one significance is positive about the sign the other is negative. There are consequences when we refused to trust God and put our trust in the enemy like Ahaz. Anytime we refuse to obey God we will fall prey to our fears and doubts. In Numbers 13 the ten spies never bring up God's name in their conversation when it came to the Promised Land. All they saw was the fortified cities and how they looked like grasshoppers in the sight of the Amalekites. When we leave God out of the equation and fall prey to our fears the calamity will be devastating. Oswalt states: "Ahaz has acted as though God is not and Assyria is, and that is a foolish course of action. It is God's presence that must be accounted for in every decision. Because Ahaz is trusting something else in place of God, he will discover God is with us, bringing the very thing he has trusted

against him (Isa. 7:18-19).”²

² John N. Oswalt, “The NIV Application Commentary: Isaiah, Grand Rapids, MI 2003 p. 142