

The First Advent Story

Immanuel - Unfiltered

God is With Us



IMMANUEL - UNFILTERED

Table of Contents

Week 1: Wonderful Counselor, God With Us - The story of King Ahaz - Isaiah 73

 The Prayer4

 Read Isaiah 7 aloud4

 Study the Text4

 Group Time: Craft the Story of Ahaz5

 Pastor’s Video Theme: IMMANUEL – Unfiltered - The Counsel of Prayer5

Notes.....6

Week 2: Mighty God With Us – The story of Isaiah – Isaiah 8 (and 6)7

 The Prayer7

 Read Isaiah 8 aloud8

 Study the Text8

 Group Time: Craft the Story of Isaiah.....8

 Pastor’s Video Theme: Immanuel – Unfiltered – God’s Word10

Notes.....10

Week 3: Father God With Us – The story of Gideon – Isaiah 9:1-5/ Judges 6, 7:1-18.....11

 The Prayer11

 Read Isaiah 9:1-5 & Judges 6:16, 28-32; 7:1-18; 8:3, 28 aloud12

 Study the text.....12

 Group Time: Craft the Story of Gideon12

 Pastor’s video theme: Immanuel – Unfiltered - Unfiltered Relationship.....14

Notes.....14

Week 4: God With Us – The story of the Prince of Peace – Isaiah 9:6-7; Mathew 115

 The Prayer15

 Read aloud Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 115

 Study the Text15

 Group Time: Craft the Story of the Everlasting King16

 Pastor’s video theme – Immanuel – Unfiltered - Everlasting Peace16

Notes.....17

Study Answer Suggestions.....18

 Week 1 Study Answers18

 Week 2 Study Answers19

 Week 3 Study Answers20

 Week 4 Study Answers21

Advent is a short church season in which we celebrate the coming, or “adventing” of our Lord into this world. God comes by breaking His time (Kairos) into human time (Chronos) as heaven and earth are united through the gift of His Son. It’s a time for us to prepare ourselves for the real Christmas event, Jesus’ birthday. By real, we mean filtering out distorted traditions, worldly habits and distractions, and removing commercialism which may have crept into how we approach this miraculous God event.

This year, we prepare by returning to the original Advent story, the story surrounding Immanuel. Only in Isaiah and Matthew do we encounter this prophetic proper pronoun. So it is to the prophet Isaiah (chapters 7,8,9) and the apostle Matthew (chapter 1) we turn our ears to listen to their telling of his story.

Immanuel unfiltered is our goal. It means for us to hear the original version of the advent story. It is unfiltered in its revelation of the genuine, authentic love of God for his people. His ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9); His thoughts are not our thoughts because His thoughts and ways are higher than ours. We must consider then that His love also is far greater than any love we can ever imagine. In ***Immanuel unfiltered***, we will see examples of some of His greater thoughts and ways that give us a glimpse of His higher love before it climaxed in the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This study is designed to be self-paced. Set your own tempo as you cover the material for each week. You will find suggested answers for the Study the Text section at the back of this booklet. Listen to the pastor’s weekly video devotional which will come to you electronically. Then, gather once a week with others to share the Group Time section where you will craft each story as it is revealed to us in today’s times.

We pray for heaven and earth to collide in a fresh revelation of Immanuel as we reflect upon God’s Word, unfiltered.

Your Writing Team:
Rev. Melinda Owens
Rev. Vivian Kinnear
Rev. Ellen Kent

Week 1: Wonderful Counselor, God With Us - The story of King Ahaz - Isaiah 7

A sign by definition is a noun indicating the presence of something else. In Genesis 9:13, God gives His first sign, a rainbow in the sky to remember the presence of His covenant with His people. The name Immanuel is a name sign which means, "God with us" or "God is with us". It signifies the presence of God. While only Isaiah and Matthew explicitly mention Immanuel, the phrase "God with us" or "God is with us", appears in other books of the Bible.

Take a look:

2 Chronicles 13:12 God is with us at the head (of the Lord's kingdom established through the sons of David) so the advice is to not fight against Him.

Now behold, God is with us (Immanuel) at our head, and His priests with the signal trumpets to sound the war cry against you. Sons of Israel do not fight against the LORD God of your fathers, for you will not succeed.

Psalms 46:7,11 God as Lord of Armies is a mighty refuge for his people.

*The LORD of armies is with us (Immanuel);
The God of Jacob is our stronghold.*

Zechariah 8:23 Mount Zion will be called the Holy Mountain, the mountain of the Lord of Armies because that is where God lives.

v. 3 'I will return to Zion and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of armies *will be called* the Holy Mountain.'

v.23 ...*The LORD of armies says this: 'In those days ten people from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you (Immanuel)."*

These other books, while not explicitly using the name, Immanuel, reinforce the meaning of the sign Isaiah presents regarding the sons of David and the Lord of Armies. They connect the name Immanuel as God is with us to the throne of David and to the city of Jerusalem as a refuge and sanctuary. God in Immanuel is ruler and protector of his people. If there are battles to be fought, we can stand with the Lord of Armies on His mountain of Truth to ensure God is with us. When challenged by foreign authorities, we can stand in the covenant through the Son of David in an everlasting kingdom.

So God uses names as signs, like Immanuel, to give us message markers. These signs help us to interpret the experience beyond the sign and embrace God's presence in each context. For example, not just the sons of David, but the story of the nearness of God throughout the royal generations. Not just Lord of Armies, but the story of God's presence in everlasting victory against our oppressors. God speaks through a name, a sign, then gives us the fullness of that name in the context of the story. So in this study our goal is to better understand the fullness of the original source of Immanuel and how it carries forward to Matthew as a name for Jesus.

Over the next four weeks, we will explore the unfiltered meaning of Immanuel, the prophetic name Isaiah gives us as a sign of God's presence. Now, more than ever as we emerge from the COVID pandemic, we need to embrace "God with us" so that we can truly understand how "God IS with us" and HAS BEEN with us and WILL BE with us through it all. Coming out of this crisis is the perfect time to reflect upon our Immanuel and see how God continues to act and be present for us in our lives – unfiltered of the worldly distractions encroaching upon us today.

Let's get the stories started.

The Prayer

Father God, Wonderful Counselor, who is always with us, how we try your patience. We rebel against your ways, but you stand steadfast before us ready to give us your counsel. Even as Christians Father, we unknowing turn to the gods of our own creation, turn to the imperfect wisdom of the world. When fear drives us to despair, you stand ready to give us exactly what we need to see our way back to you. Thank you for the signs you send us in spite of our choices. Thank you for the Sign of your presence, Jesus Christ our Lord, Immanuel, God with us our Wonderful Counselor. Amen.

Read Isaiah 7 aloud

Study the Text

1. Read 2 Kings 16:1-18
 - a. Who is Ahaz?
 - b. How old is Ahaz? 2 Kings 16:2
 - c. How long was Ahaz King of Judah? 2 Kings 16:2
 - d. Was King Ahaz like his ancestor King David? 2 Kings 16:2
2. What was the conflict that arose when Ahaz became king? 2 Kings 16:5
3. What was the condition of Ahaz and his people that prompted God to speak through Isaiah? Isaiah 7:2
4. What is the meaning of Isaiah's son's name, Shear-jashub? *If your version does not have a footnote definition, you may have to look it up elsewhere.*
5. What did God tell Isaiah to tell Ahaz? Isaiah 7:4
 - a. Why was this not going to happen?
6. Why was it important for Ahaz to believe what God is telling him? Isaiah 7:9b
7. What does God want for Ahaz?
8. Was there anything Ahaz could not ask of God? Isaiah 7:10
9. What is it that Ahaz refused from God? Isaiah 7:12
10. Who is speaking to whom in Isaiah 7:13?
 - a. What does Isaiah tell Ahaz on God's behalf? Isaiah 7:14
11. What is the sign that God chose for Ahaz? Isaiah 7:14
12. What does Isaiah say will happen before Immanuel reaches the age of discernment? Isaiah 7:15-16

IMMANUEL - UNFILTERED

- a. We see “on that day” 4 times to tell us what God is going to do to move them from prosperity to poverty. What are they?

Group Time: Craft the Story of Ahaz

1. Read Isaiah 7 aloud, taking turns in your group.
2. What lesson can we learn from Ahaz?
 - a. *When we are fearful, God desires to hear our prayer because He desires to respond. There is nothing that we cannot seek his counsel for.*
3. Introduce Ahaz to your story.
4. What is the setting?
5. What is the conflict between God and Ahaz?
 - a. *Ahaz refuses God’s sign.*
 - b. *Ahaz refuses to test God.*
6. What caused this conflict?
 - a. *Ahaz was afraid of Israel and Aram.*
 - b. *Ahaz did not see God as a solution.*
 - c. *Ahaz did not believe in God.*
7. How did the conflict escalate to a climax?
 - a. *Because Ahaz does not believe in God to help him, God will allow his greatest fear to become a reality.*
8. How does the story resolve?
 - a. *God’s plan prevails.*
9. Does the story sound familiar to you? Have you or someone you know rejected God’s plan for your/their life only to find yourself/themselves worse off than before?
 - a. *Have you ever rebelled against God’s ways?*
 - b. *What was His response?*
 - c. *How did it resolve?*
10. How would seeking God’s counsel by asking him to tell us his will and by testing our own understanding of what he means look like?
 - a. *Bible study and prayer, listening for God’s response, a sign, a symbol of His presence.*
11. How has this story unfiltered your understanding of Immanuel? How has Immanuel become more real to you?
 - a. *God desires to be with us to counsel us in His often incomprehensible ways, yet he will send us a sign of His presence if we but ask him for it.*

Pastor’s Video Theme: IMMANUEL – Unfiltered - The Counsel of Prayer

God’s wonderful counsel is greater than any we can find on earth. It is unfiltered, pure, and absolute. God’s counsel to Ahaz was to give him a sign, a pure and absolute sign that Immanuel, God is with us. It comes not out of our own wisdom, faith, or understanding, but out of God’s. Ahaz’ story is the story of God’s wonderful, incomprehensible counsel, unfiltered.

IMMANUEL - UNFILTERED

Through prayer, we too may receive God's wonderful counsel by learning to turn to him and asking him to show us his plan.

Notes

Week 2: Mighty God With Us – The story of Isaiah – Isaiah 8 (and 6)

Do you remember the two prophetic names from Isaiah 7? What do they mean?

Shear-jashub. *Means a remnant shall return, pointing to a future event.*

Immanuel. *Means God is with us, a present action.*

In chapter 8, God names yet another child of Isaiah's as a sign for yet another prophecy. His name is Maher-shalal-hash-baz which means swift is the plunder, speedy is the prey. This name points to a reality in the present tense.

These names transcend time as we know it, pointing to the past, the present and the future. They are names from God whose perspective of time is *Kairos*, which signals God's action, not to be confused with *Chronos* time which signals human action. These names are one way God casts his vision to Isaiah to signal His action.

In chapter 8, we also see God and Isaiah scribing a testimony with Isaiah's disciples who will be entrusted to deliver it on a day when it will teach those returning to God (Shear-jashub; a remnant will return) what happened and why. God is acting in the present, preparing His word for a future event.

The credibility of a testimony is determined biblically when it can be attested to by two witnesses. The term "mighty" in this chapter does point to both the powerful hand of God and to the words of this testimony with its proper witness. "Mighty" also points to the ability of the testimony to transcend time.

Notice that the work of the witness is to verify the truth of the testimony. The witness lends strength to the testimony.

God has preserved His testimony in the Holy Scriptures which have been entrusted to the Church. The Church is to make disciples who will be its witnesses to the world. We are to be witnesses to the testimony of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Immanuel (God is with us).

The Prayer

Mighty God, Wonderful Counselor, you protect us, nevertheless. You allow the consequences of our disobedience to wash over us while you protect the obedient. Help us to think more like you and less like the world around us, to stand firm in our faith formed from the signs you give us. Help us become your witness among your people to remind them of the promises you have made to be our God and we your people; to remind them of your mighty power unmatched in all your creation. Thank you for the mighty power of your Word and wonderful counsel we have in our Lord Jesus Christ, Immanuel, our mighty God with us. Amen.

Read Isaiah 8 aloud

Study the Text

1. Read Isaiah 6. When did Isaiah receive his vision from God? Isaiah 6:1
 - a. What did God tell Isaiah to do? Isaiah 6:9-13
2. How is Isaiah to record this message? Isaiah 8:1
 - a. What does Maher-shalal-hash-baz mean?
3. What does God tell Isaiah HE would do? Isaiah 8:2
4. Who is "I" in Isaiah 8:3?
 - a. What did he do?
5. What did God tell Isaiah to name his son? Isaiah 8:3-4
 - a. Why
6. What else does God tell Isaiah about Judah? Isaiah 8:5-8
7. Why does God want to do this? Isaiah 8:9-10
8. How did God speak to Isaiah? Isaiah 8:11
9. So, what does God tell Isaiah not to do? Isaiah 8:11
10. God continues his clarify his instructions to Isaiah.
 - a. Isaiah 8:12
 - b. Isaiah 8:13 Who is Isaiah to fear and dread?
 - c. Why?
 - d. Unlike to the northern and southern kingdoms. Isaiah 8:14-15
 - i. The Holy Lord of Armies will be:
 - ii. And many will stumble and fall and be broken, snared, and caught by foreign forces.
11. What does Isaiah do with this testimony from God? Isaiah 8:16
12. What else will Isaiah do? Isaiah 8:17
 - a. Is this a passive wait?
 - b. Why does he not wait passively? Isaiah 8:19-20
 - c. What is the cost of ignoring this mighty word, powerful testimony from God?

Group Time: Craft the Story of Isaiah

1. Read Isaiah 8 aloud, taking turns in your group.
2. What lesson can we learn from Isaiah?
 - a. *We are to be testimony bearers, witnesses of God's mighty Word, the Truth that has played out in biblical history according to God's plan.*
3. Introduce Isaiah to your story.
4. What is the setting?
5. Where does the conflict lie?
 - a. Two conflicts run parallel. One in **kairos** time, one in **chronos** time.
 - i. *In God's story, between God and His people who rejected His gentle ways.*
 - ii. *In Isaiah's story, between Isaiah and the people's ways.*
6. What caused this conflict?

- a. *In God's story, God's people refused God's plan for their life and His gentle ways resulting in the need for God to use stronger ways.*
 - b. *In Isaiah's story, the people ignored Isaiah's message from God and turned to spiritualists.*
7. How is this conflict to escalate to a climax?
- a. *In God's story, before Maher-shalal-hash-baz can speak his first words, the wealth of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria will be carried away before the King of Assyria.*
 - b. *In Isaiah's story, this generation will see Isaiah seal up God's testimony for his holy remnant.*
8. How does the story resolve?
- a. *In God's story, the Holy Lord of Armies can be both a stumbling block for those who reject God and a refuge for those who walk in God's ways. One chooses to either walk in darkness or walk toward the light.*
 - i. *Recall other places in the Bible that refer to God as Lord of Armies.*
 - b. *In Isaiah's story, Isaiah waits for God to execute His plan. Isaiah and his disciples will become signs and wonders who always point people to God's plan.*

Psalms 46:7,11 (God as Lord of Armies is a mighty refuge for his people) v. 7 & 11 The LORD of armies is with us; The God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Zechariah 8:23 (spoken by the Lord of Armies) v. 3 'I will return to Zion and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD of armies will be called the Holy Mountain.' ...The LORD of armies says this: 'In those days ten people from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."'"

9. Do the lessons of these stories sound familiar to you?
- a. *Have you ever been challenged by God like Isaiah was to not think like the other people?*
 - b. *How do you see the Holy Lord of Armies possibly working today?*
 - c. *Have you ever felt caught in between wanting to defend God's testimony rather than attesting to its truth?*
 - d. *Compare or contrast God's role in His story and Isaiah's role in his story.*

10. How would seeking God's might, the power of his word help us be better witnesses to God's testimony?
- a. *While God's counsel is often more than we can comprehend, the powerful message of his Word is not. With the power of the Holy Spirit we can learn its Truth and become a better witness of that Truth.*
11. How has this story unfiltered your understanding of Immanuel? Has Immanuel become more real to you?
- a. *The mighty power of God's Word transcends in **kairos** time and is ever present and has been witnessed by Jesus and the Father in the Gospels.*

IMMANUEL - UNFILTERED

Pastor's Video Theme: Immanuel – Unfiltered – God's Word

God's might is greater than any we can find on earth. It is also unfiltered, pure, and absolute. God gives us lessons and testimonies in the Bible for our good even as we stand in the midst of suffering. Yet, our mighty God does not leave us no matter what lesson he teaches us. He is Immanuel, God is with us. Isaiah's story (Chronos) is the story of God's might (Kairos), his Word, his testimony unfiltered delivered for us today.

Notes

Week 3: Father God With Us – The story of Gideon – Isaiah 9:1-5/ Judges 6, 7:1-18

God will not leave his people in darkness.

Isaiah reaches back into the history of God's people to both the time of Judges (Midianites around 1179-1154 BC) and to the time of the Twelve Tribes of Israel (Zebulun and Naphtali around 700 BC).

Zebulun and Naphtali were two of the first twelve tribes of Israel located around the sea of Galilee. They were also two of the ten tribes who rebelled against the kingdom of David and formed the Northern Kingdom. They were conquered by the Assyrian kingdom in the 700's BC which caused the people of the Northern Kingdom to scatter and allowed foreign people to live in the Promised Land. The place once called Zebulun and Naphtali became filled with gloom and anguish, darkness, and despair. These two tribes went dark when their people were scattered because they had turned away from God.

Then Isaiah prophesies forward into the future to the time we connect with the birth of Christ, a time of great light, marking the geographical spot of this transition from darkness to light. Before Galilee was called Galilee, it was called by the names of the two tribes of Israel who resided there, Zebulun and Naphtali.

In Isaiah's future, light will return to that same place, and it will have a new name, Galilee. In that same place, the glory of God will re-emerge, and the people will see the great light and their nation will multiply. Isaiah is affirming that God's light will return to the submerged land of Immanuel.

Isaiah also reaches further back into the history of God's people, before the Twelve Tribes to the time of Judges. He refers to what God did to the Midianites in around 1179-1154 BC. God had allowed the Midianites to exert their strength over the Israelites who subsequently lived in fear of them. So much so, that the Israelites strayed from worshipping God to worshipping the Midianite god, Baal. Isaiah is remembering on behalf of Judah because in their fear, they have forgotten what God is able to do. To refresh our memory to Isaiah's reference, we turn to the story of Gideon whom God used to lead Israel out from under the yoke and rod of the Midianites.

There is a name sign in Gideon's story too. Gideon is renamed Jerubbaal after doing what God asked him to do in tearing down the altars of Baal. However, this name, comes from the angry Baal worshippers, not from God. It mocks God in his way of using name signs to communicate with his people. Nevertheless, the name and reputation stuck to Gideon for his lifetime.

The Prayer

Father God, Mighty God, Wonderful Counselor, we can call on you always to deliver us from darkness and help us seek your will. There is nothing you will not do to assure us of

IMMANUEL - UNFILTERED

your truth. Even though there are times we don't sense your presence, you are there, waiting for our faith to re-emerge from the burdens we bear. Give us the discernment to walk obediently in your ways, give us insight into your thoughts, lead us step by step on to the path of righteousness. Thank you for your patience with our unknowing. Thank you mostly for the victory you give us in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Read Isaiah 9:1-5 & Judges 6:16, 28-32; 7:1-18; 8:3, 28 aloud

Study the text

Isaiah 9:1-5

1. What is the first word that opens Isaiah 9:1?
 - a. What does this word signal?
 - b. What is the exception Isaiah describes in this verse?
 - c. Describe the contrasting moods of this transition.
 - d. How long did it take for this transition to complete?
 - e. Describe the progressive and contrasting movement of this transition in Isaiah 9:2-3
2. What is God's purpose of this transition? Isaiah 9:4-5
 - a. Has God done this before?
 - b. What will happen to the army uniforms?
 - c. Why is this significant to recognize?

Judges 6:16, 28-32

1. What does God remind Gideon? Judges 6:16
 - a. What is Paul's take on weakness? 2 Corinthians 12:9-11

Judges 7:1-18

1. Why was Gideon called Jerubbaal? Judges 6:28-32; 7:1
2. God reduced Gideon's army from 32,000 to 300. Why? Judges 7:2
3. How did God confirm to Gideon his command to take the victory? Judges 7:2,8,14
4. What did Gideon do next? Judges 7:15-18

Judges 8:3, 28

1. What did God do? Judges 8:3; 28
2. How long did this peace last? Judges 8:28

Group Time: Craft the Story of Gideon

1. Read Isaiah 9:1-5 and Judges 6:16, 28-32; 7:1-18, 8:3,28 aloud, taking turns in your group.
2. What lesson can we learn from Gideon?
 - a. *God is very accommodating if we but respond to His presence. He relishes a relationship with us as long as we understand that He is God, and we are not.*
3. Introduce Gideon to your story.
4. What is the setting?

- a. *God's people are suffering under the yoke of Midianite oppression.*
5. Where does the conflict lie?
- a. Three conflicts run parallel.
- i. *In God's story, between God and His people who rejected His gentle ways and so then turned them over to the Midianite oppression.*
- ii. *In God's people's story, between them and the Midianites under whom they suffer the yoke and rod of a foreign government.*
- iii. *In Gideon's story, between Gideon and himself, thinking he is too weak to do anything about his circumstances.*
6. What caused this conflict?
- a. *In God's story, his people turned to Baal worship.*
- b. *In God's people's story, they turned to other gods and government.*
- c. *In Gideon's story, he no longer felt/sensed/believed God was present with him and his people.*
7. How is this conflict to escalate to a climax?
- a. *In God's story, God sends them a savior/hero in Gideon to lead them to victory over oppression.*
- b. *In God's people's story, they gather under Gideon to go to battle for their freedom.*
- c. *In Gideon's story, Gideon learns to trust himself that he is truly hearing from God and sense that God is present with him.*
8. How does the story resolve?
- a. *In God's story, the awareness of his presence is reestablished during Gideon's lifetime.*
- b. *In God's people's story, they are restored to peace until they once again forget God.*
- c. *In Gideon's story, he is awarded a lifetime of peace for himself and his people.*
9. Do any of these stories sound familiar to you?
- a. *Forgetting God and turning to lesser gods?*
- b. *Suffering under the oppression of a foreign authority?*
- c. *Humbly trusting God to use you in powerful ways? To thank God for the victory before it is won?*
10. What does responding to God in a right relationship look like? *Gideon was humble enough to test God and to make sure he was in God's favor. He found God's response in signs and dreams and listening to His word. Gideon was obedient to God even though he did not see himself as God saw him. Gideon was obedient when he struck down the altars of other gods to rebuild an altar for God, putting worship first. Gideon was not perfect, but he perfectly obeyed and worshipped God.*
11. How has this story removed any filters of your understanding of Immanuel? How has Immanuel become more real to you?
- a. *God desires to restore a peaceful relationship with us, now and forever.*

IMMANUEL - UNFILTERED

- b. *God desires for us to worship only him.*
- c. *God is patient and encourages our growing in faith through testing and asking for signs.*
- d. *God has plans for us greater than any we can imagine.*
- e. *God speaks to us through prophets, angels, heroes, signs...*
- f. *God is with us even when we don't realize it.*

Pastor's video theme: Immanuel – Unfiltered - Unfiltered Relationship

Our Father is always patient with us. This relationship is unfiltered, pure, and absolute. Our Father shows us how he teaches us even as we doubt what we hear. He allows us to test him to make sure we get the lessons right. Our Father never fails us. He is Immanuel, God is with us. He teaches us out of his love for us and is patient with our learning. Gideon's story is the story of our Father teaching us what we most need to know, unfiltered.

Notes

Week 4: God With Us – The story of the Prince of Peace – Isaiah 9:6-7; Mathew 1

Now that we have refreshed our memories of Ahaz, Isaiah and Gideon, let's see how they connect for the names God has given Immanuel.

In your own thoughts, summarize

Ahaz' story:

Isaiah's story:

Gideon's story:

Our takeaway from these stories is how God is a Wonderful Counselor, but Ahaz willfully turned away from God's counsel; that God is a Mighty God and Isaiah believed in the power of His word, the strength of His testimony; and that God is our Eternal Father and we see how Gideon came to trust in the relationship he had with God as he willfully obeyed Him.

Now, let's assemble this short birth narrative of Isaiah 9:6-7 in the context of these name signs Isaiah identifies as belonging to this special Gift from God, Immanuel who is with us.

The Prayer

Father God, Mighty God, Wonderful Counselor, bring us your everlasting peace through an everlasting King, a perfect Son, our Prince of Peace. Give us a fresh testimony this advent season of this child who you have named Immanuel because you want to be with us always. Bring us safely into His kingdom where he is Lord of Lords, forever and ever. Amen.

Read aloud Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 1

Study the Text

1. When is the birth of the child expected? Isaiah 9:6a

Note: A Son will be given to us. In Isaiah 9:6b the child will be a Son; we will receive a Son. "Given" is also a preposition meaning "with" that fits nicely into context here. We could also read this as "A son will be with us."

2. Is the father of the Son identified here?

3. What will rest on his shoulders? Isaiah 9:6c

4. What prophetic name has God given to this Son? Isaiah 9:6d

5. How long will this government last? Isaiah 9:7a Why?

6. What kind of government will it be? Isaiah 7b

7. Where will this peaceful never ending government rule from? Isaiah 9:7c

8. How is this government related to King David's government? Matthew 1:1. Note the biological line of succession from King David, son of David, back to who?

IMMANUEL - UNFILTERED

- a. It is traced forward to who? Matthew 1:6-16
 - b. God grafted himself into his creation from his promise to Abraham and David via their earthly son, Joseph. How does this help you understand the significance of Joseph?
9. Who will establish this kingdom of peace? Isaiah 9:7d
10. Under the umbrella of peace, what will uphold this peace? Isaiah 9:7e
11. How have the previous stories enlightened your understanding of this King of the everlasting peaceful kingdom?
12. Who does Isaiah say will make this event happen? Isaiah 9:7e
 - a. Whose battle has it been?
13. How will God make this happen? Isaiah 9:7f
 - a. What do we know about zealots?
14. Matthew refers to Isaiah 7:14 linking the establishment of the government in this kingdom we hear about in Isaiah 9 to the child referred to in Isaiah 7:14. What is the name of the Son of David, King, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace?

Group Time: Craft the Story of the Everlasting King

1. What lesson can we learn from the Prince of Peace?
 - a. *He has been part of God's plan for His people all along.*
2. Introduce the Prince of Peace into your story.
 - a. *Out of darkness came the light who is and was the Prince of Peace.*
3. What is the setting?
 - a. *Darkness*
4. Where does the conflict lie?
 - a. *God does not want His people to remain in darkness.*
5. What caused this conflict?
 - a. *God's people turned away from God.*
6. How is this conflict to escalate to a climax?
 - a. *Fear and reliance upon the world will cause conflict to escalate.*
7. How does the story resolve?
 - a. *God through His grace gives us the gift of His Son to be with us, bringing us peace and light, not only for this life but also forever.*
8. Even in times of greatest darkness, the Prince of Peace brings light as a reminder of God's eternal promise for eternal peace.
9. Immanuel had four names. Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Father God, and Prince of Peace. How do these names explain how God is with us?

Pastor's video theme – Immanuel – Unfiltered - Everlasting Peace

Jesus is the Prince of Peace who brings us Immanuel, God is with us. God is with us as our Mighty Counselor as the Holy Spirit. God is with us as our Mighty God through the power of the resurrection. God is with us as our Father. Yes, when Jesus was resurrected, the veil that

IMMANUEL - UNFILTERED

separated our most Holy God from His people was torn in two. Because of Jesus, we have access to our Father on earth as it is in heaven. This access gives us the promise of everlasting peace. This is Immanuel, unfiltered.

Notes

Study Answer Suggestions

Week 1 Study Answers

1.
 - a. Son of Jotham, Son of Uzziah, King of Judah
 - b. Age 20
 - c. 16 years
 - d. No
 - e. Aram and Israel (Ephraim) joined forces against Judah.
2. Their hearts were afraid of being overcome by Aram and Israel.
3. It means a remnant shall return.
4. Aram and Israel would not be successful in overcoming Judah.
 - a. Because it was man's plan not God's plan.
5. If they did not believe God, they would not last.
6. God wants to protect Ahaz so that he would not be afraid. God counseled Ahaz but what God told him was incomprehensible to him.
7. Nothing. We can ask for a sign as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven. We can ask for a sign from the darkest of places to the lightest of places and God will give us that sign.
8. He refused to ask God for a sign and to test God.
9. It is Isaiah because he references "my God" and clearly, Ahaz has rejected God. (More about "my God" in chapter 8, Isaiah's story).
 - a. God will give you a sign even though Ahaz has tried God's patience. BECAUSE GOD'S PLAN IS GOD'S PLAN. Ahaz's rejection of God's sign and refusal to test God does not deter God's plan.
10. A child born of a virgin whose name is Immanuel which means "God is with us".
11. The land belonging to Judah will be transformed and not in a good way.
 - a. Invasion of foreigners: Isaiah 7:18-19 Assyria will settle in, become a nuisance and land everywhere.
 - b. Shameful identity: Isaiah 7:20 God will shave the head, hair, legs, and beard of Assyria. It is symbolic of the land being shaved. It is what foreign armies do to the people they conquer to shame them in defeat, removing their identity.
 - c. Barren land: Isaiah 7:23 The vines will become briars and thorns, a symbol for the devastation that will come over the land.
 - d. Meager sustenance: Isaiah 7:21 They will eat curds and honey. Isaiah 7:24-25 Land will become unplowable. It will transform from an agricultural land to pastoral fields for oxen and sheep. People will come with bows and arrows instead of plows. People will migrate from pasture to pasture to find food for their animals instead of growing food from the fields. The earth will not provide their sustenance directly anymore. They will need to care for their animals to give them food to eat.

Week 2 Study Answers

1. See Isaiah 6:1
 - a. To tell God's people that a holy seed will remain.
2. To take a tablet and write *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*
 - a. Swift is the plunder/booty, speedy is the prey
3. He will provide the witness of two, Uriah (the Lord is my light) the priest and Zechariah (God has remembered) the son of Jeberechiah (may have been a prophet to Uzziah).
 - a. So, Isaiah is to be the writer, author of God's testimony and Uriah and Zechariah are to be God's witnesses as to the truth of this testimony.
4. Isaiah
 - a. Impregnated his wife
5. *Maher-shalal-hash-baz*
 - a. Because before this child can speak the words "mother" and "father" (implying a short time), the wealth of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria will be carried away before the King of Assyria.
6.
 - a. These people have rejected the gentle flowing waters of Shiloah. God is with us to help us live quietly and peacefully.
 - b. These people rejoice (make an agreement with) (NRSV melt in fear) in Rezin (Syria's king) and the son of Remaliah (Israel's king). Hebrew meaning unclear: from Orthodox Hebrew Bible: ⁶Forasmuch as HaAm HaZeh refuseth the waters of Shiloah that flow softly, and delight in [*alliance with*] Retzin and Ben Remalyahu.
 - c. Therefore, God will now bring the strong and abundant Euphrates River (the King of Assyria and all his glory). And this river will overflow its boundaries and sweep into Syria, Israel and Judah filling the expanse of Immanuel's (God with us) land (Judah) but only up to its neck (not drowning Judah). Breadth of wings will protect Judah.
7.
 - a. He wants to break them, to shatter those who have rejected his gentle flowing waters (way).
 - b. He wants to tell them what is going to happen to them, to prepare them for his plan.
 - c. He wants them to learn that God's plan is the ONLY plan, all their plans will fail because the powerful word of God will stand and theirs will not.
8. With a mighty hand/with power, the power of a testimony from God.
9. To not walk like his people walk, to not think like they think. Clearly a lesson in what NOT to do.
10. God continues his clarify his instructions to Isaiah.
 - a.
 - i. This is not God conspiring against Judah with her enemies.
 - ii. Do not fear and dread what they fear and dread.
 - b.

IMMANUEL - UNFILTERED

iii. The Holy Lord of Armies

c. Because the Holy Lord of Armies will become a sanctuary, a safe place for Isaiah and his remnant.

d. Unlike to the northern and southern kingdoms. Isaiah 8:14-15

iv.

1. A stumbling stone, a rock to trip them

2. A snare and trap for those who live in Jerusalem

v. And many will stumble and fall and be broken, snared, and caught by foreign forces.

11. He will bind it up and seal it and keep it among his disciples as a lesson, a powerful word, a testimony from God.

12. Isaiah eagerly waits for God to work his plan.

a. No Isaiah 8:18 Isaiah and his disciples are to be signs and wonders in Israel sent by the Holy Lord of Armies who dwells on Mt. Zion.

b. Because God's people counsel with the dead and not the living. Isaiah needs to always point them to God.

c. They will walk in darkness, they will be hungry, outraged and curse their king and their God. They will look to the earth and see only distress and darkness, gloom, and anguish. This will drive them away into darkness.

Week 3 Study Answers

Isaiah 9:1-5

1. But or Nevertheless

a. An exception, a change.

b. Like when God gave his contempt to Zebulun and Naphtali, it didn't last forever.

c. From gloom to glory, from darkness to light.

d. From the day of the tribes of Israel to the day of Jesus in Galilee, over 700 years.

e.

i. Walk in darkness/see a great light

ii. Live in dark land/light will shine upon them

iii. God will multiply nation; increase joy/they will rejoice God is with them like the joy of harvest/victory of battle

2. God will break the yoke of their burden. God will break the staff on their shoulders. God will break the rod of their oppressors.

a. Yes, like at Midian (see Judges 6-8).

b. Boots and cloaks will be repurposed as fuel for fire signaling the end of oppression.

c. They will no longer be needed because there will always be peace.

Judges 6:16, 28-32

IMMANUEL - UNFILTERED

1. That He, God would be with him (Immanuel) and because of that Gideon, the weakest, will destroy the Midianites.
 - a. When he is weak he is strong because Christ dwells in him.

Judges 7:1-18

1. Because he destroyed the altars of Baal.
2. To prevent Israel from boasting that they were victorious in their own power. Gideon was already aware that he could do none of this in his own power.
3. In a dream.
4. Gideon thanked God for the victory before it happened.

Judges 8:3, 28

1. God handed the leaders of Midian back to the sons of Israel and God restored his people.
2. Only during Gideon's lifetime.

Week 4 Study Answers

1. A child will be born to us indicates a future event, a creation that currently does not exist.
2. No, it is implied. No reference to it being Isaiah who we know clearly from the previous chapter, the sons he had. No reference to him belonging to anyone. Since this IS God's testimony being told, it is easy to infer the Son comes from God. Reading further, his names will indicate this is so.
3. The government of what? God's people? Again, turn to context. We have 3 kings who govern their nations. Two of these kings have governed God's people and failed. This passage implies that the mantle of government of God's people will pass to this Son.
4. Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. We will come back to these names but first, continue the thread of the government theme.
5. Forever. It will always be increasing, unending. Established without an end. This is in contrast to Gideon's peace which only lasted during his lifetime. The lifetime of the Prince of Peace will be forever and therefore peace will last forever.
6. A rule of peace also increasing and unending. A peaceful never ending government.
7. The throne of David. This promise is rooted in the history of God's people exposing His plan over generations.
8. Abraham
 - a. Joseph, the father of Jesus.
 - b. Joseph had to have understood his lineage. This would have helped him make sense of the angel's visit to tell him about Mary's conception.
9. This King will establish his everlasting peaceful kingdom.
10. It will be upheld with justice and righteousness.

11.
 - a. Wonderful Counselor *we have the best counsel in him, even when afraid.*
 - b. Mighty God *He is one and the same powerful God above all.*
 - c. Eternal Father *He is our everlasting Father, we are his children always, nothing can ever change that. He is a patient and teaching Father. These three attributes of God are assigned also to the Son.*
 - d. Prince of Peace *He is the leader into everlasting peace, no more battles, no more rods and yokes except for his justice and righteousness. The Prince of Peace is also Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God and Eternal Father. Can you see the Trinity emerging from these names?*
 - i. *Holy Spirit Counselor*
 - ii. *Mighty power in Resurrection of Son*
 - iii. *Eternal Father*
12. The Lord of Armies.
 - a. The Lord of Armies'
13. Through the zeal he has for his people.
 - a. *They are extremists, highly committed to a cause who separate themselves out from the rest of the people. We can corrupt zeal, but God cannot. How can God's incorruptible zeal enlighten us?*
14. Immanuel – God with us. *Immanuel is the story of how God will establish himself with us forevermore.*

Christmas Eve

at Christ Church

3:00 Children and Family Service

5:00, 7:00, and 9:00 PM Candlelight Worship

Live Nativity 4-8:00 PM

cc-um.org



CHRIST CHURCH
UNITED METHODIST

6363 Research Forest Drive
The Woodlands, Texas 77381
936-273-2030