

Explore the Bible: September 20

God Promises • Isaiah 7:7-17

By Don Hicks



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The boldest and most meaningful promise in human history is recorded for us in Isaiah 7:14: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,” Isaiah 7:14 (KJV). The most important – the boldest – part of Isaiah’s prophecy is when he says, “...and shall call his name Immanuel,” which the New Testament tells us means God with us. Nothing is more significant than the creator God promising to be with us.

Jesus reassured his disciples as He was leaving to return to Heaven, by explaining the importance of His being “God with us.” He told them, “God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age,” Matthew 28:18-20 (MSG).

The most controversial part of Isaiah 7:14, at least among the worldly, is the claim of the Messiah’s virgin birth. Satan uses the pridefulness of man to question the truth of this

prophecy. Many non-believers dismiss as foolish the idea that a virgin girl could conceive and give birth to a child. If you understand that God spoke the world into existence and created Adam and Eve, then surely you would believe God Almighty could cause a virgin to conceive and give birth.

Some who feel that they can explain away all of God's miracles look at this Old Testament verse written eight centuries before the birth of Christ and want to argue about the meaning of the Hebrew word that is translated as virgin. "Almah," the Hebrew word translated virgin, does have other meanings and translations in other Old Testament passages. Blake Hearson, who wrote the Biblical commentary for this lesson in the Leaders Guide, is professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Midwestern Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. Hearson tells us "almah" does in fact have meanings other than just virgin elsewhere in Hebrew writings.

Focus on the context of Isaiah's writing here in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah wanted to help King Ahaz have enough faith to trust God to adequately protect Judah from the coalition of Israel and Aram (modern day Syria). King Ahaz wanted to solve Judah's problem by human power and without help from God. Isaiah said to Ahaz, "Listen, house of David! Is it not enough for you to try the patience of men? Will you also try the patience of my God?" Isaiah 7:13 (CSB). Isaiah told the king that God would give him a sign whose magnitude was as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven. This is where the verse 14 says, "Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel" Isaiah 7:14 (CSB). A young woman giving birth to a baby boy would not have the magnitude as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven.

Do not depend on my fallible human logic to help you understand the meaning of virgin in Isaiah 7:14. A key principle of Biblical interpretation is to find another verse or passage that gives the interpretation of the word or

passage you are seeking to understand. In this case, the Gospel of Matthew opens with a clear explanation of Isaiah's prophecy: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" Matthew 1:22-23 (KJV).

An even closer look at this whole New Testament passage explains very clearly the meaning of virgin: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. ...But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost" Matthew 1:18-20 (KJV).

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