

Immanuel: Law or Gospel?

(Isaiah 7:14, NIV) *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.*

When Isaiah spoke these words to King Ahaz, he spoke them as a warning that God is indeed present among His people, and that He does pay attention to us. As Ahaz was not following the will of God, but rather directly defying Him, this was not good news.

But this Advent season, Immanuel, born of a virgin, is gospel (good news) for us, for God is indeed with us. (John 1:14, NIV) *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.* He took on our weaknesses and suffering. He knows what it is to struggle, and for our sake, He has overcome our struggles.

Yet to many, this Immanuel is still Law. Those who haven't been to church recently, those involved in sinful habits and choices, and those who fear that their sin is too great, God's presence is uncomfortable at best. But Immanuel came not to condemn you, but to save you. (John 3:17) The church is about love and God's forgiveness freely offered to all, even you!

Immanuel is God *with* us and *for* us, and if God is for us, who can be against us?