

עִמָּנוּ אֵל

“Immanu-El - God With Us”



Shabbat Shalom

I have spoken in the past on this verse explaining the difference between Almah - Betulah and Na-arah, this time we will read the same verses but no Hebrew technicalities. Just a message that seeks to understand what Immanu El signified back then in Biblical times and what it can mean to us today.

Lets all read Isaiah chapter 7 we will concentrate on verse 14, in Hebrew:

לְכֵן נָתַן אֲדֹנָי הוּא לָכֶם אֹת הַנְּהַת הַעַלְמָה הַרְהַ וְיִלְדֶת בֵּן וְקָרְאת שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּ אֵל:

14. "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanu-El".

If we turn to Matthew, Matthew's gospel and chapter 1 and verse 23: we read "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanu El, which being interpreted is, God with us".

Now I want to speak to you this morning for a few moments on the background in Isaiah and on the meaning of 'Immanu El'. The meaning of Immanu El, of course, we know from the passage in Matthew that Immanu El means 'God with us'. As Charles Wesley, (John's brother), said: 'Our God contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man' - God with us, God come to dwell in the person of the Lord Jesus the Messiah.'

I want to ask three questions of us all this morning - the first question is this: what did this prophesy of Immanu El mean in the days of Isaiah? The second question is: what did prophesy of Immanu El mean in Matthew's days? And the third question is: what does prophesy of Immanu El mean to you & me, who live so far away in time and space?

So let's deal with the first question first all: what did this prophesy of Immanu El mean in the days of Isaiah? What is the background to Isaiah chapter 7, This is an important historical time, many prophets come from this period, and we find that Isaiah is speaking to the King of Judah, King Ahaz; now King Ahaz reigned for sixteen years B.C. 740-724. King Ahaz was an evil man; King Ahaz was a man who was known to sacrifice his own children to false gods, his son would be sacrificed by making the child pass through the fire in the valley of Hinnom. The kind of king you really do not want. Not only did he sacrifice his own children, he let many in Judea to do the same. There are conflicting reports on what that means precisely but the child would die as a "peace sacrifice" so that the gods were appeased. The false god Molech would be satisfied for a little while by the death of a child. So when you know the character of King Ahaz, (2 Kings 16:2) you know that we're dealing with an evil king, as we read this story we should realise that the Assyrian Empire, which was one of the superpowers of that day in the region it was up and coming only Egypt had some influence at beginning, now Assyria was increasing in its world influence and world power.

Now Syria (not the same as Assyria) and the northern Kingdom of Israel formed a coalition and tried to force Judea to be a part of this coalition, in order to oppose the onslaught and the growing power of the Assyrians. They made a proposition to King Ahaz, but King Ahaz wavered. Should he refuse an alliance with Ephraim and Syria or should he align himself with Egypt or with Assyria? He wavered to and fro, he didn't know whether to join this coalition or not, and because of his hesitation, Syria and the Ephraim that is the Northern kingdom of Israel turned against him - they decided that they were going to coerce King Ahaz, they were going to punish him for his lukewarmness, they were going to depose him, they were going to put another King upon the throne of Judah so that they could have their way. Hearing the news that Syria and Israel were forming an alliance against him, King Ahaz trembled. At this point the prophet enters with a message of God. Isaiah the prophet was sent to the King to calm him down, to give him a message of **comfort**, and we read that in the message of chapter 7. (Despite the fact that Ahaz introduced his people to many idolatrous customs (Isaiah. 8:19; 38:8; 2 Kings 23:12) God is gracious not only to speak to him but to the entire nation of Judah, offering him such a message of hope.

The basic message of Isaiah in Australian sounds something like this: 'Look here mate, **if you would only trust in God**, If you would only put your faith in God, give everything into His hands, then you would be alright mate and God will look after you and your people. He will take care of you and your throne'. And that in essence is what we read.

Then Isaiah commanded King Ahaz to actually test God, (which was forbidden the other way around in Deuteronomy 6:16. Do not tempt the Lord your God), here we read the reverse God told Ahaz to ask for sign. This is not tempting God (He asked) it is testing God's patience not to seek a sign, Ahaz display false humility. Now this was not the first sign, God had already given another signs. Yes King Ahaz and the nation had already received many signs, like the warning from the past and then present day prophets, this was not a tempting of God, all that was needed was a simple obedience to ask God for a sign.

God gives Ahaz a confirmation not to worry about the alliance, and God is given a sign to confirm it His message. Now there at this time we have three significant prophets in the lands of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah, namely Isaiah, Hosea and Micah. But our king Ahaz in all his pride, in all his stubbornness, he refused to seek a sign - he went his own way. He trusted in his own wisdom and he decided that it would be better trust politics and he went and made a treaty with another nation, to be exact with the King of Assyria - the enemies of the whole of that continent - only to have the King of Assyria: Tiglath-pileser; break that covenant and Ahaz, as we would say today, ended up with egg on his face. It is easy for us now to say Stupid Ahaz, but are we obedient to His voice? most Messianic Jews and Christians do not evangelize and how often do we really spend time in prayer? Or go out and support the ailing? 'Lord I was busy' will not cut it. Our salvation is secure because of the sanctifying work of Yeshua (Jesus) but we are called to go, evangelize, pray & minister. <PAUSE & REFLECT>

What was the perception of God with us:

1. For God to guide the King was perceived as "God with us", this guidance to the king came in the form of one or two leaders, the Priest and the Prophet for one spoke to God on behalf of the people, the other spoke to the king and the people on behalf of God.
 - a. In Matthew's gospel we see Jesus as Yeshua haMelech; Jesus the king

- Isaiah Children Isaiah 8:18
 - *“Behold, I and the children which Jehovah has given me for signs and types in Israel, from Jehovah of hosts, who dwells upon Mount Zion.”*

SIGNS and WONDERS” His children were signs and enigmatical symbols of the future, and that from the LORD of hosts who dwelt on Zion. In accordance with His counsel, He had selected these signs and types: He who could bring to pass the future, which they set forth, as surely as He was the LORD of hosts, and who would bring it to pass as surely as He had chosen Mount Zion for the scene of His gracious presence upon earth. Shear-yashub and Mahershalal were indeed no just as symbols of future wrath but also of future grace. Isaiah and his children were figures and emblems of redemption, opening a way for itself through judgment

- The Royal Child Isaiah 9:6-7
 - *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

Immanu-El and the Royal child stand out because of two things For Immanu El the mother would be a virgin. And for both they are called by a divine name.

Back to the Child that was born in the days of Ahaz. And when that child grew - we don't know the name of the child, but we know that there was a child - and that this child was a sign, listen: that child was to signify that God is with His people. Amidst all the trial and tribulation and pressure that the nation of Judah faced, even though their King betrayed them, even though their King buckled under the pressure of human men and kings and politicians, God **remained** with His people. That's what Immanu El meant to Isaiah - it was a child that would be born some day, and this is a fore-taste but this fore-taste would signify judgement upon Ahaz, judgement upon Assyria, Israel and Syria, and would signify deliverance of God's people, it would signify divine hope, God's grace, God's faithfulness in the midst of failure.

Now, this name 'Immanu El' is only found **three** times in the word of God: it's found here in Isaiah, then it is found again in chapter 8 and verse 8, and then it's found in Matthew 1 and verse 23, but in the Hebrew Bible we can see it more, not as a name but a title or a promise. עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים is an abbreviation עִמָּנוּ אֱלֹהִים as is found in Exodus 20:19 in a slight negative context, and even more important as עִמָּנוּ יְהוָה as it is recorded in Numbers 10:32 is a positive verse. It is expressed in the Psalms 46:12: יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת עִמָּנוּ מִשְׁגַּב־לָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ The LORD of hosts is **with us**; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

God with us was not a new concept but the sign of the Virgin given birth to a man called “God with us” would be radical. It can have two meanings in Isaiah - it can either mean that 'the birth of this child signifies **God's hand on us**, simply that God is looking after us, that God was caring for His people - or the second meaning of the word could be this: that God is not just looking after us, that God doesn't just have His hand on us and is caring for us, and is planning our greater good, but the birth of the God / Man, God's very presence had come to actually dwell within the body of this child. Which meaning is it? Well, if you turn to Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6, you see that it says: 'For unto us a child is born' - speaking of this child, Immanu El - 'unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The mighty God', the everlasting father and the prince of peace!

פלא יועץ - אל גבור - אביעד - שר-שלום

All these names are only used of God in Isaiah; most of these names are used exclusively throughout the Old Testament for God alone.

And the birth of this child was not simply to signify, like a badge or like a licence to God's people, that He was with them and they could produce it, they could show this child [to prove] that God was with them - but this child was more than that, this child actually signified the living presence of the eternal, mighty God with His people. And that child was not born in Isaiah's day – but the first sign of it that He was coming was, and that may have been what Immanu El meant to Isaiah.

The second question that I've asked is: what does Immanu El mean to Matthew? If you turn to the second reference of 'Immanu El' in Matthew's gospel chapter 1 and verse 23, you read that very famous verse: (Matthew 1:23 ASV) Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, And they shall call his name Immanu El; which is, being interpreted, God with us.

What did this name 'Immanu El' mean to Matthew? What did it mean to the Jews whom Matthew was writing to? My mind wandered as I asked myself this question. The famous Jewish artist Marc Chagall once drew a series of pictures of a Russian winter landscape twilight, in black charcoal it was clear that it had lots of snow, there was a dreary, dark house in the background that looked lonely and desolate. Right there, in the midst of the storm, all that could be seen was a dark black house shadowed with the silhouette of leafless trees. It was a sad picture, Chagall painted it more than once and in another picture he changed the whole picture with a one quick stroke - just one quick stroke - with a bright yellow crayon, Chagall simply put in a streak of light coming from the window. The effect, it was revolutionary, it was light in darkness, because the entire scene was translated from a dark and gloomy winter landscape into a vision of a loving home with light and comfort. When I read the Gospel accounts I sense that darkness (Matthew 4:16 The people that sat in **darkness** Saw a great light, And to them that sat in the region of the **shadow of death**, To them did light spring up.) in the person of Yeshua we see that ray of light, coming into their world: that is what the name 'Immanu El' meant to Matthew, that is what the name 'Immanu El' meant to God's people, the Jews, at this time, John wrote (1 John 1:5 And this is the message which we have heard from him and announce unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.). It was like a streak of light, just into the darkness - and Yeshua the Messiah, the Light of the world, The Immanu El, that child that would be born in darkness and would be the Light of the world, (Luke 2:32 A light for revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of your people Israel.).

The point of it is this, the point of the name Immanu El, the only time it's mentioned in the New Testament is in Matthew: to show that - just as the sign that was given to Ahaz so to Immanu El was to signify the hope of Israel, and deliverance and grace - so the birth of Messiah was perceived as the Immanu El who would signify deliverance.

He would signify God's saving act among His people. **The birth of first sign the child in Ahaz's days and the fulfilment of Immanu El in Yeshua**, signify that God's presence is with His people through a child. We know that of Immanu El it was also said: '...and a child shall lead them (Isaiah 11:6) Isaiah's child points to the Messiah.

Immanu El is not just a prophecy; it is a sign pointing to the birth of the Lord Yeshua, the child that was conceived in the womb of Mary, that child that was conceived by the Holy Spirit that overshadowed her. To conceive a true **Immanu-El, The God With Us**.

Can I ask you this morning: have you ever met Jesus - Yeshua the Messiah, - I ask you what does Immanu El mean to you? Yes he is a man, born of Mary, he is even a Sign, but he is not just a man and not just a Sign, he is also God in the flesh, He was that child born back then, He is the one that leads us through the darkness, and gives us peace. He will come soon back to reign on the earth. Do you know Him?

Traditionally it is His birthday we celebrate soon. If you do not know Him, call unto Him and He will answer you, that is the Grace of the Lord He brought forth salvation unto ALL men.

If you already believe and you have received the grace of the Lord Yeshua already. What does Immanu El mean to you? God Made Manifest. The Eternal, Blessed Be He who stooped down into time and space. What a wonderful stooping this was! He took upon Himself flesh, He took upon Himself humanity. Only to be rejected and despised. Yet for you and me He is the Visible Magnificent Manifest Presence of God. Is what we worship, God Manifest God with us. This is the Yeshua we worship, this is the Yeshua we know.

Paul wrote (2 Corinthians 5:20; "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Messiah, as though God were pleading with us: we ask *you* on behalf of Messiah, be reconciled to God." That is what Yeshua did beginning at his birth and enabling the whole in his death. Will you become his ambassador?

Paul writes (Colossians 2:9 for in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,) But the words of Yeshua speak the loudest, John recorded them in his gospel John 14:20 "In that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." Just as the divine presence dwelt within Yeshua so Yeshua dwells within all of us. He is calling us to share that good news **Messiah within us**, not the news of the world but the good news of Immanu El, the wonderful counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

I just like to close in Prayer: May we at this time and in every season share the Good News of Immanu El, God with us. His love revealed to us all. As it is written in 1 John 4:9-11 (Complete Jewish Bible) "(9) Here is how God showed his love among us: God sent his only Son into the world, so that through him we might have life. (10) Here is what love is: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the kapparah* for our sins. (11) Beloved friends, if this is how God loved us, we likewise ought to love one another." Lord give us strength as we share Immanu El, God With us.
Amen

**propitiation or atoning sacrifice*

שלום בישוע דמשיח

Shalom in Yeshua the Messiah

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