

IMMANUEL

Reviving Trust

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Have you ever felt abandoned? Betrayed? Overwhelmingly threatened? As when members of your own family refuse to communicate with you. Or when your friends turn against you, and it seems there is nowhere to turn, no one who understands, no one to lend support.

Do you wonder if God has anything to say about such situations? *Can* He help? *Will* He? Let's find out.

Such was once the case in ancient Judah. And God had something to say about it then.

The descendents of Jacob, the tribes of Israel, had divided. The 10 northern tribes, known as Israel, had separated from the 2 southern tribes, known as Judah.

What first was thought to be different values and life goals, was eventually revealed to be jealousy and disdain. The separation grew bitter and hostile as Israel wandered more and more from the ways of their God, Jehovah, and forged for themselves a warped quasi-religious lifestyle, intermingled with secularism. Hanging out with the wrong crowd twisted their thinking, until they became enemies of their own brethren, as it may still do with us.

Isaiah 7:1 When Ahaz, son of Jotham and grandson of Uzziah, was king of Judah, King Rezin of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah, the king of Israel, set out to attack Jerusalem. However, they were unable to carry out their plan.

And here's the backstory:

Isaiah 7:2 The news had come to the royal court of Judah: "Syria is allied with Israel against us!" So the hearts of the king and his people trembled with fear, like trees shaking in a storm.

³ Then the Lord said to Isaiah, "Take your son Shear-jashub and go out to meet King Ahaz. You will find him at the end of the aqueduct that feeds water into the upper pool, near the road leading to the field where cloth is washed. ⁴ Tell him to stop worrying. Tell him he doesn't need to fear the fierce anger of those two burned-out embers, King Rezin of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah. ⁵ Yes, the kings of Syria and Israel are plotting against him, saying, ⁶ 'We will attack Judah and capture it for ourselves. Then we will install the son of Tabeel as Judah's king.'

⁷ But this is what the Sovereign Lord says: "This invasion will never happen; it will never take place; ⁸ for Syria is no stronger than its capital, Damascus, and Damascus is no stronger than its

king, Rezin. As for Israel, within sixty-five years it will be crushed and completely destroyed.
⁹ Israel is no stronger than its capital, Samaria, and Samaria is no stronger than its king, Pekah son of Remaliah. Unless your faith is firm, I cannot make you stand firm.”

¹⁰ Later, the Lord sent this message to King Ahaz: ¹¹ “Ask the Lord your God for a sign of confirmation, Ahaz. Make it as difficult as you want—as high as heaven or as deep as the place of the dead.”

¹² But the king refused. “No,” he said, “I will not test the Lord like that.”

¹³ Then Isaiah said, “Listen well, you royal family of David! Isn’t it enough to exhaust human patience? Must you exhaust the patience of my God as well? ¹⁴ All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’).

The short-term historical sequel of this story was this: Immanuel was, for Ahaz, a confirmation of God’s intent to rescue His people. A comforting word, a message of hope. And God did rescue them.

The division of the tribes, however, has remained to this day, though their names have changed over time, and the physical separation is less sharp. The reunion of the remaining tribes of Jacob is one of the Last Days events yet to take place.

The spiritual sequel of this story is that, according to the Scriptures, that reunion will not be political, but spiritual—faith-based. Their division will only end when they come to share a common faith in Immanuel.

On a much larger, historical scale, the greater Immanuel—Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God—is a sign to ALL nations, of God’s intent to bring all people together under Christ. In fact, Immanuel is the great Uniter of all peoples—Jewish and non-Jewish.

Ephesians 2:14 For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. ¹⁵ He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups.

By His sacrifice on the cross and the present activity of His Spirit, Jesus Christ is making the two groups—all people, as many as will let Him—into one new kind of man.

That, however, was not the last time God addressed this situation. The Bible offers more than an ancient illustration. Here, now, is the biblical sequel:

Matthew 1:18 This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

²⁰ As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

²² All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet: ²³ “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’ ”

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

See now, “All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through His prophet.”

Isaiah’s prophecy had been waiting for more than seven centuries for its ultimate fulfillment, of which Ahaz’s trials were only an illustration. God’s plan has always been (and will always be) bigger than one political group or nation; He cares for all of His creation!

Prophecies that come from God—God’s words—always have a purpose beyond their immediate, obvious fulfillment, or individual blessing—they have a purpose which is revealed in Christ Jesus.

That’s why you and I can put our faith in the words we find written in this book, though they are thousands of years old.

That’s why a word you read or hear from the Bible may suddenly impact you, as though it was written just for you. That’s when faith comes.

Romans 10:17 Faith comes through the message about Christ.

And the proper response is tell the Lord that you have heard His word and will begin to trust Him to bring it to pass for you.

That’s why the Bible is always as relevant as today’s sunrise, and more relevant than today’s news.

God's words impregnate those who hear Him. By the power of the Holy Spirit, God's words conceive a new hope, a promise of good, in those who receive them.

Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² In those days when you pray, I will listen. ¹³ If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me. ¹⁴ I will be found by you," says the Lord. "I will end your captivity and restore your fortunes.*

But these are not abstract spiritual truths, disengaged from real life. In fact, they are bound by God into the fabric of real, historical life. For God's message was not words alone, but a Person.

His name shall be called Immanuel, became You are to name Him Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.

A real Person—Son of God (conceived by the Holy Spirit) and Son of Man (born of a virgin)—became the world's Immanuel, everyone's promise that God has drawn near, that His presence abides and is available to all who will seek Him (as wise men still do).

Jesus Christ revives our trust in God's words.

Jesus Christ revives our trust in God's presence.

Jesus Christ revives our trust in God's good purpose.

Give Jesus your attention, for trust cannot grow without conscientious thought.

Give Jesus your obedience, for trust is not complete without practiced submission.

God's words, God's presence, God's purpose.

How do you need Immanuel to come to you today? Then, why not come to Him right now and ask Him to meet with you?