

## Meditations for Advent Week 4, December 21-24, 2025

### Monday, December 22

Isaiah 7:10-16 is in many ways the framework of the Nativity Scene; Isaiah who, in the time of political drama, counsels a king unwilling to listen to the core message: Trust God, not military power! In frustration, Isaiah finally delivers a “sign” that includes key elements of the much later birth narrative of Jesus: a pregnant young woman, a child called divinely named “God with us,” a failure by both the Syrian and Assyrian to rise to world power (that will be up to the Romans!) and a child growing up in obscurity.

From the New Revised Standard Version, Update

<sup>10</sup>Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup>“Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” <sup>12</sup>But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.” <sup>13</sup>Then Isaiah said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? <sup>14</sup>Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. <sup>15</sup>He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. <sup>16</sup>For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

From The Message, a paraphrase by Eugene Peterson

<sup>11</sup> God spoke again to Ahaz. This time he said, “Ask for a sign from your God. Ask anything. Be extravagant. Ask for the moon!”

<sup>12-17</sup> But Ahaz said, “I’d never do that. I’d never make demands like that on God!” So Isaiah told him, “Then listen to this, government of David! It’s bad enough that you make people tired with your pious, timid hypocrisies, but now you’re making God tired. So the Master is going to give you a sign anyway. Watch for this: A girl who is presently a virgin will get pregnant. She’ll bear a son and name him Immanuel (God-With-Us). By the time the child is twelve years old, able to make moral decisions, the threat of war will be over. Relax, those two kings that have you so worried will be out of the picture. But also be warned: God will bring on you and your people and your government a judgment worse than anything since the time the kingdom split, when Ephraim left Judah. The king of Assyria is coming!”

The prophecies of Isaiah span all the years of the monarchy and beyond. Scholars have argued and proposed...but the problems of history and authorship simply cannot be solved! This does not negate the profound spiritual insight with the Book known as Isaiah. Dense and baffling though it may be, Isaiah is rich in spiritual insight. One approach I’ve found useful when struggling with a text is this: *Throw nothing away!* That means, keep wondering why these words, why this command, why this love, why this anger?

*Prayer: Creating, Sustaining, Redeeming God, I confess my confusion and wonder that you desire to be with us! May I enjoy you today and always. Amen.*