

Isaiah 7v14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name **Immanuel**. Matthew 1v23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name **Immanuel**"

For 400 years silence had fallen over Israel. God had not spoken since the prophet Malachi and Israel was now languishing under Roman occupation and rule by the Caesars. The Jews longed for the promised Messiah to come and rescue them. Simeon, a righteous and devout Jew, was waiting for the 'consolation' of Israel and Anna the Prophetess prayed in the Temple day and night, looking forward to the 'redemption' of Jerusalem.

Now, in God's perfect time, a glorious prophecy, given by God to the prophet Isaiah 700 years previously, in the days when King Ahaz reigned, was being fulfilled in Bethlehem; a humble teenage virgin was giving birth to a divine child. "All this took place to fulfil what the LORD had said through the prophet: The Virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and they will call Him Immanuel -which means- God with us". (Matt 1: 22-23)

This was no ordinary child. Angels gave glory to God before shepherds who ran to find the proclaimed Saviour: and wise men would come from afar to worship Him, bringing treasures fit for this King.

Immanuel, God Himself, had come down from glory in the person of Jesus Christ and clothed himself in human flesh, fully God, fully man. God's redemptive plan did not involve sending an angel or a former prophet to save His people, but because of His great love for us, He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes on Him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16 NKJV) This is the One of whom John in his gospel says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God (John 1:1)... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14 NKJV)

God is no longer silent. In these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, Whom He has appointed heir of all things, and through Whom He made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. (Heb 1:1 NIV) His message to

all peoples from all nations, today and every day is to repent and believe on Him, for the forgiveness of the sin that separates us from knowing Him personally, as our Lord and Saviour.

O come thou Rod of Jesse, (Jesus) free

Thine own from Satan's tyranny.

From depths of Hell Thy people save,

And give them victory o'er the grave.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel has come to thee, O Israel.

(Hymn Translator John Mason Neale 1861)

Have a very blessed Christmas!