

JESUS OR IMMANUEL?

Why Matthew gives the child two names

Isaiah 7:14 | Isaiah 8:8-10 | Isaiah 9:6-7 | Matthew 1:18-25 | Matthew 28:20

THE QUESTION: If Isaiah says the child would be called Immanuel, why did Joseph and Mary name him Jesus?

JESUS - THE PERSONAL NAME

Matthew 1:21: "You shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Jesus (Greek *Iesous*; Hebrew/Aramaic *Yeshua*) is associated with "YHWH saves" or "YHWH is salvation."

Matthew connects the name directly to his mission: he will save his people from their sins.

IMMANUEL - THE PROPHETIC DESIGNATION

Matthew 1:23: "They shall call his name Immanuel" - "God with us."

Immanuel comes from Hebrew: *immanu*, "with us," and *El*, "God."

Matthew uses the designation to explain the significance and identity of the child.

Why there is no contradiction

Matthew places both statements only two verses apart. He knows the child's actual name is Jesus. His quotation of Isaiah therefore does not require Immanuel to be Jesus' everyday personal name. Matthew presents Jesus as the commanded personal name and Immanuel as a designation describing who has come among his people.

Read Isaiah in context

Isaiah 7 contains children whose names carry prophetic meaning: Shear-jashub ("a remnant shall return"), Maher-shalal-hash-baz ("swift is the spoil, speedy is the prey"), and Immanuel ("God with us"). The Immanuel theme continues in Isaiah 8:8-10, followed by the child of Isaiah 9:6 who is called "Mighty God" and "Prince of Peace."

ISAIAH 7:14
Immanuel
"God with us"

ISAIAH 8:8-10
"O Immanuel!"
"God is with us"

ISAIAH 9:6
A child
"Mighty God"

Matthew's Gospel frame

Matthew 1:23: "Immanuel ... God with us." **Matthew 28:20:** "I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew begins with "God with us" and closes with Jesus promising his continuing presence. This makes Immanuel part of Matthew's presentation of Jesus' identity, not merely an alternate personal name.

Discussion

1. Why is it unlikely that Matthew was confused about the child's name? 2. What does each name communicate? 3. How do Isaiah 8 and 9 develop the Immanuel theme? 4. What does Matthew 28:20 add to Matthew 1:23?

THE PEARL

Jesus tells us his mission: YHWH saves. Immanuel tells us his identity: God with us.