



## The Promised Hope Isaiah 7:14; 53:5

The dictionary defines hope “as the expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.” Hope is also a desire for things to be better because that certain thing happens. For example, at Christmas children hope for certain gifts to be under the tree Christmas morning. They wait with hope expecting gifts to make their lives better. Hope is vital part of the Christmas story. The world devastated by sin needed help to make things better. God spoke the first word of hope in Genesis 3:15, and then continually made promises directly and through the prophets of the One who would rescue and heal all of creation from the destructive effects of sin.

### The Sign of Hope

Judah was afraid because the nation of Aram had joined forces with the Northern Kingdom of Israel to threaten Judah. God told Ahaz, the king of Judah, not to fear because Judah would not be conquered. God told Ahaz to ask for a sign that would show God’s promise would come true. Ahaz refused. God gave him a sign anyway. The sign would have meaning for Ahaz in his day, but also for everyone of all time, “Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14). The sign was a virgin birth – Impossible. The sign indicated that God was going to do something! Do something for Ahaz and do something for all mankind. *When is a time you have seen signs that God is at work around you? How did it make you feel?*

### Because God is With Us, We Have Hope

The virgin’s son’s name is significant – Immanuel. Immanuel means *God with us*. Not only was God going to do something impossible. God was coming to earth himself to do it. God didn’t tell the world to straighten itself out, then he would come. In his love for us, he came to us when we didn’t deserve it. God loved us first while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). While the Israelites waited for God to come, we look back at a God who came and is presently with us. *How does knowing God is with you give you strength, joy and hope?*

### Because of Jesus’ Sacrifice, We have Hope

Which is more important, Christmas or Easter? Of course, they both are. There is no Easter without God becoming man at Christmas. And there is no reason to celebrate Christmas without Easter. Without Easter, Christmas is just the story of the birth of a Hebrew boy. In other words, if Christmas is the promise, then Easter is the proof. Not only did Isaiah prophecy Immanuel would be born, he prophesied the Servant would die for sin. (Isaiah 53). Jesus’s death and resurrection was the fulfillment of the promises to fix the sin problem. With our faith in Jesus, we participate in the solution. With a secured future in heaven with God we have a hope that sustains us in the present as we wait with expectation for Jesus’ second coming. *How does hope in the future positively affect our present? What is one practical way to sacrifice and serve someone else as a way of sharing hope?*