

## Advent 3—Who is this Child?

- I. Introduction
  - a. These promises that we have been looking at through Advent show up in the darkest of times. Today's promises are no except.
  - b. And with that said, it causes me to think that our days are not much different. Jesus instructed his disciples to pray "deliver us from evil" for good reason. Evil is everywhere. It is all around us. It is inside us. And we know of the evil one—Satan—who is prowling around seeking someone to devour.
  - c. These promises give us a strong foundation to stand on. The lion and the lamb do not yet lay down beside each other but we long for Christ's return. Is he worth waiting for?
  - d. That's why I think these texts we are looking at today ought to give us faith, strengthen our faith and encourage that God will save us and that he is with us to the end of the age.
- II. Main Point
  - a. The birth of this particular Child is the hope of any who believe!
- III. Outline
  - a. Isaiah 7—A Sign of the Promise—the virgin birth
  - b. Isaiah 9—The Four Names of this Child
  - c. Matthew 1—The Fulfillment of the Promise
  - d. Micah 5—The Place of His Birth
- IV. Exposition
  - a. Now, let's look at Isaiah 7 to see why King Ahaz and the people of Judah are shacking like trees in a strong wind and why God gives them a sign.
    - i. The scene in chapter 7 and really all of Isaiah is bleak. The kingdoms have been divided for several years at this point and Israel, the northern kingdom, has partnered with Syria intending to attack Jerusalem. Their primary target is the house of David which is King Ahaz.
      1. The Lord sends Isaiah and his son out to meet King Ahaz as Syria and Israel come to Jerusalem. Ahaz is checking on the water supply for Jerusalem before they attack.
        - a. The Lord tells Isaiah to say this to Ahaz: (Isa. 7:4-6) 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Re-zin and Syria and the son of Re-maliah. <sup>5</sup> Because Syria, with E-phraim and the son of Re-maliah, has devised evil against you, saying, <sup>6</sup> "Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tab-e-el as king in the midst of it,"
          - i. At that moment, Ahaz must decide to trust the Lord or devise his own plan to save Judah. He's already checking the conduit at the upper pool.
          - ii. Isn't this just like us? Two armies approach Jerusalem. What can they do?
          - iii. According to Isaiah, the Lord says he should not fear them.
          - iv. What would you do? Even when the situation appears impossible, is that enough to cause us to trust God?
          - v. Put yourself in the scene. At that moment you must decide if God's word can be trusted. Isaiah delivered the message. God isn't hovering above them in the cloud or pillar of fire. There is no visible manifestation of God. Just words. The armies of Syria and Israel he can see but God and the hosts of heaven he cannot see.
        - b. The Lord goes on to say their threat to take the throne of David will not stand. God had made a promise to David that his son would sit upon his throne forever. He adds, and Israel will fall within 65 years of being a people.

- i. In other words, they will be taken into exile for their rebellion. This might not be soon enough to comfort King Ahaz.
  - ii. In God's kindness and knowing the weakness of men, he speaks to Ahaz again: (Isa. 7:10-11) <sup>10</sup> Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: <sup>11</sup> "Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."
    1. This is meant to encourage Ahaz to trust the Lord. This is great. This is gracious. Ahaz, ask me for a sign that I will save Judah from these two armies.
2. Will Ahaz receive this gift from the Lord? Will he stop worrying about the water supply and head back to the city with full trust that God is indeed God and will do exactly as he says?
  - a. How often do we treat God as God? He is all-knowing, all-powerful and all-present. Does Ahaz need anyone else?
  - b. Faith is necessary to access God's promises. God doesn't work on anyone else's terms. He sets the terms and faith seems easy enough but all of us know it's not so simple.
    - i. The armies marching in may seem far more real than God right now. Ahaz has a nation to protect.
    - ii. A promise doesn't feel stable enough but it should because God is always faithful.
  - c. Ahaz responds to God concerning the sign: (Isa. 7:12) "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test."
    - i. God had said something like this: "In your crisis, when it counts for you, trust me. I will keep my every promise. But if you treat me as unreal, you will not connect with reality at all" (Ortlund 90).
    - ii. The decision is made. Ahaz will not trust the Lord. He's too pious for that. He even quotes Dt. 6:16.
3. How will God respond?
  - a. Isaiah responds on behalf of the Lord: (Isa. 7:13) "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?
    - i. Back in verse 11 Isaiah had said to Ahaz, "your God," but here he excludes him and God is now Isaiah's God, not Ahaz's.
    - ii. In other words, "My God isn't on your side anymore" (90).
  - b. In the midst of this scene comes our Advent promise. Ahaz would not ask for a sign but God gives one that will be for the days ahead.
    - i. (Isa. 7:14) <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
    - ii. God is gracious and faithful even when Ahaz isn't.
    - iii. Though Ahaz does not trust the Lord, he does keep his promise to Abraham and David.
    - iv. This promise is for the house of David. I say that because the "you" in verse 14 is plural.
    - v. And secondly, it is fulfilled later. The promise seems to point to a specific virgin when it says "the virgin."
    - vi. Yet, in his grace, God was with Ahaz and Judah. Syria and Israel fall. But the rejection will lead to Assyria coming to see them in the days ahead.
    - vii. This is the context of the promise. Two armies seeking to destroy the house of David.

1. Thankfully, the decision of Ahaz doesn't limit God's ability to save his people and keep his promises.
- b. We will look at how this unfolds in the Gospel of Matthew in a moment. But before we do, there are more reasons to think that God's promise of the virgin birth of this child will be for days ahead. It comes in our next text. There, this Child is not only Immanuel, God with us, in the sense of his influence and power but rather God means far more than that.
- i. We've heard the previous promise but God also promises destruction in coming from Assyria. The gloom of God's wrath for some is brushed off much like the promise of this Child. However, there is always a remnant of people who trust the Lord. And God promises to send light in the darkness.
    1. (Isa. 9:1-5) But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. <sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. <sup>3</sup> You have multiplied the nation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as they are glad when they divide the spoil. <sup>4</sup> For the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. <sup>5</sup> For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult and every garment rolled in blood will be burned as fuel for the fire.
  - ii. After the threats from the northern kingdom and Syria and the impending judgment coming from Assyria, God makes more promises in chapter 9 concerning this Child to be born.
    1. The answer to the powers of the world leveled against God's people is none other than a Child!
    2. (Isa. 9:6) <sup>6</sup> For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
    3. Bringing these two promises together gives us a much fuller picture of what to expect.
      - a. The promise given to Eve is still intact. A woman will bear a Son who will crush the head of the snake.
      - b. Yet, it is unique as we will discuss in a moment.
      - c. Though it is unique, the child will be born not just appear. This Son will go through some of the normal processes any other human being does.
      - d. Also, this Son will be given. His birth will happen in such a way that no human being can claim they did anything. He is a gift to be received.
      - e. Not only that, this child will be a King! He will free them from their oppressors but more importantly, he will free them from their greatest enemy—sin. The governing of this Kingdom will rest on the shoulder of this Child. But how can this be?
      - f. Throughout the OT, names are very often used to describe the person. Abraham—father of many nations. Isaac—laughter because his mom laughed at God when he promised she would bear a son. Jacob—means cheater who cheated his brother out of his blessing. And so on.
      - g. While 7:14 said this Child would be called Immanuel, 9:6 further describes the name with four more descriptions:
        - i. Wonderful Counselor—he will be a King that needs not counsel. He will be doing the counseling. He is the wise Son who does all things well.

- ii. And not only will he be “God with us” he will be God himself somehow embodied in a child. Though his birth makes clear his human nature, there’s something unique about this child. For he will be mighty God too.
    - iii. This Child...this Son...will be called Everlasting Father. He is eternal. One who is born but had no beginning. And this Child exactly embodies the deity of YHWH.
    - iv. And finally, this child must have this kind of nature in order to do what we all need. Only God can bring peace. Only God himself can meet his own demands. And he will do that perfectly through the Prince of Peace.
    - v. This is the Child the world needs. This is the Child given to the world that whoever believes may not perish but have eternal life! Only this Child can offer us peace with God and the eternally peaceful Kingdom that will have no end.
- c. We must ask, who is this Child? What does the Gospel of Matthew have to say about this promise from Isaiah concerning the virgin bearing a son?
  - i. If we give this much thought, we must consider that what Isaiah has promised is impossible. As we know, that’s not how children are conceived.
  - ii. When we pick up in the scene near the end of Matthew chapter 1, Mary is found to be with child.
    - 1. In other words, it became noticeable. She was betrothed to Joseph which would be similar to our engagement period before marriage. What was different about this time before the marriage than ours was that the betrothal was legally binding.
      - a. When Mary is found to be with child, Joseph seeks to divorce her which was the law according to Deut. 22. Being a just man, he sought to do this quietly. If it had gone public, it would have been shameful and could have led to stoning.
      - b. However, while Joseph slept, an angel appeared to him and said: (Matt. 1:20) "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.
        - i. That meant she had not been unfaithful and adulterous. The child was there by some miraculous act of the Holy Spirit.
        - ii. What looked really bad for Mary, wasn’t bad at all but how do you explain that which was impossible?
        - iii. Now it may just look bad for both of them since they had not made the next step in the marriage process.
        - iv. But the angel tells Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife.
  - iii. Now, the angel goes on to say to Joseph: (Matt. 1:21) <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."
    - 1. The name, Jesus, means YHWH saves. Again, you hear this additional name describing what he will do, He will save his people from their sins.
      - a. From the beginning, this was the most important act of the coming Messiah—to save his people from their sins.
      - b. The peace we long for and is coming must first begin with peace with God because our sin has separated us from him and we will eternally die without this Savior/Messiah.
    - 2. Matthew sees this as the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. Notice what he says: (Matt. 1:22-23) <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the

virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

- a. This is glorious news! This is what Christmas is all about. God did the impossible (which is no problem for him) to save us from our sins.
  - b. The night has been long. We have walked in darkness and we loved it. But the Light has come to expose our sin and save us! Wow. What amazing love!
- iv. Why was the virgin birth necessary to happen like that? There are more but let's consider two major reasons:
1. "The virgin birth made possible the uniting of full deity and full humanity in one person. This was the means God used to send his Son into the world as a man." (Grudem 530)
    - a. Any other way would not have clearly united humanity and deity in one person.
  2. And this is just how God works for his glory. The virgin birth, similar to the birth of Isaac, was impossible. Only God can do the impossible.
    - a. What the birth of Isaac made clear was that God works by way of promises not by what man can do.
    - b. The virgin birth of Jesus "shows that salvation ultimately must come from the Lord" (529).
  3. Christmas is all about the glory of God in the salvation of his people through the miraculous birth of Jesus, God's Son.
- d. One more miracle. Where was this birth to take place? (Mic. 5:2) <sup>2</sup> But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.
- i. The problem is, Joseph and Mary live in Nazareth. How will the birth happen in Bethlehem? Well, the God of the impossible puts in the mind of Caesar Augustus to issue a decree for the whole world.
    1. One of the most powerful men of the time is directed by God Almighty!
    2. So, Joseph and Mary make the 70-mile journey to Bethlehem to register according to the decree and guess what, Mary gives birth in Bethlehem.
  - ii. I need a God who can do the impossible. I need a Savior who can really save me from my sins. And I believe God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit can and will accomplish that for anyone who will repent and believe. That's who I trust!
- V. Response
- a. How shall we respond? Will you trust the promises of God?
  - b. Is he trustworthy? Can he do it? No matter your darkness, he is the Light who saves his people from their sin. Repent and believe!