

What Child Is This

Isaiah 7:14

Isaiah 9:6-7

In Isaiah 7, we read,

14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14 (NASB))

And in Isaiah 9, we read,

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will (accomplish) this. (Isaiah 9:6-7 (KJV))

As I give us the words of this message today, I do it knowing that we have all heard these words so many, many times before. But a question . . . How often, in all those many times that we've heard these words, have we stopped our fleeting thoughts long enough to truly hear them, to really give these words the "hearing" that they deserve.

I know that we say things to each other like, "remember the reason for the season." And we complain about Christmas having become so secular and so commercialized, some people even refusing to call it "Christmas", and only using the word "holiday" when they speak of it.

But what about us? What about you and me? While we're not able do much about what the world does, or about what other people do, we really can do something about our own personal response to this Holy event that we call "Christmas". And we should! And we must! Because this story of Christmas truly is part of the greatest story ever told.

With that being said, may we for these next few minutes, quieten our hearts and minds and souls and think deeply about what actually took place on that first Christmas day, on that day when God's plan took its first steps towards fulfilling the prophecies that I read for you a moment ago. Listen again, first from Isaiah 7,

14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14 (NASB))

And from Isaiah 9,

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Precious words! But as God's plans always are, these things really did not start on Christmas day, or even the many years earlier when Isaiah gave this prophecy. God's plan really began long even before the first foundation blocks of the earth were laid.

It was in a "time" even before "time" really began, long before the earth and the stars were created, a "time" when the only thing that existed was God Himself, the Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And it was in the counsels of the Holy Trinity that a mysterious decision was made, a decision for them, the Trinity, to bring forth a people, a people that would be in some ways like them, made in their image, but who would not be exactly the same as them.

And the plan was to be that out of that people would come a special "Chosen Race", a "Holy Priesthood" of people who would become a Holy "bride" for God's beloved Son, the Lord Jesus. And it was with that decision and that plan, and with great love, that God formed man, out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him, the "breath of life".

And then from that first man, Adam, men and women began to fill the earth. But sadly, as we now know, along the way, those men and women began to follow the patterns of their earthly father, Adam, exercising their "free will", and making wrong and sinful choices.

But it's here that I want to remind us, that God was not at all surprised by man's choices. He had foreordained, from the beginning, that His creation would have the freedom to make freewill choices. But also, and thankfully so, it was within His foreknowledge that God also made this provision that we just read about here in Isaiah chapter 9, these words of prophecy of the Christmas story.

But also, even further, God knew that the prophecy given by Isaiah later in chapter 53, would also need to take place, the part of the story about the suffering and the crucifixion of His Beloved Son, the "Lord of glory", bringing this whole Christmas story into complete focus.

And so, for us today, as we celebrate this part of the Christmas story, the birth of the Blessed Little Baby, Jesus, we can know all of the story, and we can know the real reason for it all.

And may we do that by reading some of this blessed story, beginning about nine months before Jesus' birth. Because it was then that God revealed to Mary, a young virgin, that she had been chosen to bear His Beloved Son, the "Son of God". What an honor! Turn with me and listen to these familiar words given in Luke chapter 1.

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!" 29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. 30 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:26-33 (ESV))

May I pause here and remind us that these words here in this Gospel of Luke are fulfilling the prophecies I just read to us from Isaiah, words prophesied some 700 years earlier. Those words again, Isaiah 7, verse 14,

14 . . . Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel (which means, God with us). (Isaiah 7:14)

. . . continuing on in verse 34 of Luke 1,

34 . . . Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. 36 And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:34-38 (ESV))

And then, just as Gabriel had said, in the fullness of time, Mary gave birth to this precious Child, the "Lord of glory", "Immanuel". And as we know, the birth didn't take

place with majestic grandeur, but instead took place in a stable, with lowly animals all around. Follow along with me as I read those words in Luke chapter 2.

1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. 2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city. 4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, 5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.

6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; 11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger. 17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child. 18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. 19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart. 20 The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them. (Luke 2:1-20 (NASB))

For us, for you and me, in our limited ability to understand, this is where this story began, with a seemingly helpless little baby, cuddled in His mother's arms and sheltered in a stable. And I would suggest that the Baby Jesus, looked very much like most other

babies. And he really was. He nursed and He slept. He probably cried when He was hungry. And He would later grow into an ordinary figure of a man.

But we must understand, that from the beginning, Jesus was never an ordinary child. And He would not grow to be an ordinary man. Above all else, though He was a son to Joseph and Mary, He was first and foremost the “Son of God”. It was the Holy Spirit who formed His DNA within Mary’s womb. Neither Joseph nor any other man was involved in Jesus’ conception. It was God and God alone. That is why, as we read here in Luke 1

31 . . . behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. (Luke 1:31-32)

34 And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” 35 And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. (Luke 1:34-35)

This baby truly was the “Son of God”! And He came from His throne in heaven to live in this world for one blessed purpose, to save His people from their sin, to save us from all those wrong choices that our “free will” entices us to make.

And while all the fuss and activity of the Christmas season gets focused on giving and receiving gifts, and on families spending family time together, somehow, we must each take the time to pull aside from all those complicated involvements and give our hearts over to the true reality of this incomprehensible gift that God has given to us. We must stop our fevered activities and do as Mary did, “look” intently into the Face of this Beloved Child, the “Son of the Living God”, the “Lord of Glory”.

I love the contemplation that the songs, “What Child Is This?” and “Mary Did You Know” give to the Person of this Baby Child Jesus. Can you imagine holding the Baby Jesus and looking into His face. Do you think that you could have comprehended that you were looking into the Face of God, the same God who had once simply spoken, and the whole earth and the stars were mysteriously created into existence, the same God who would calm a storm, heal the sick and raise the dead, the same face who, in 33 years, would be disfigured by a worst kind of suffering, the same face who would bleed and die so that you and I could be saved from our sins, and be saved from the eternal punishment that we rightfully deserve?

Folks, Jesus is “Immanuel”, God with us! And He is,

6 . . . Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6 (KJV))

And at the very core of all that we believe, we must know that He is our Savior and our Lord. And that if we will only receive Him, He will surely abide within us, guiding us and directing us all the days of our lives, and on into eternity.

May I encourage us, may I plead with each of us, to pull away from the busyness of the usual Christmas celebration, and take time to gaze into the face of the “Beauty of holiness”, the Lord Jesus.

14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14 (NASB))

In Isaiah 9,

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