

December 2, 2018 Prophecy 101 Isaiah 7:10-17

The Bible is a very special book: a book of books; in fact, a library of 66 different documents. And of course this is what everyone of them has in common: the inspiration of each one of those documents or books, was not simply religious experience, but the result of the call, the inspiration of the living God who made heaven and earth. Having said that about all and each of the books that make up the Bible there is a very special class or group of documents within the collection. The Old Testament prophets.

This is a truth that is recognized by all Biblical scholars. The greatest of the Prophets was Isaiah. Seven centuries before Jesus was born, in Bethlehem, Isaiah in several passages compiled from his messages to the Kingdom of Judah, announced His birth and the significance of HIS coming. Isaiah is regarded as the preeminent prophet of redemption...because of what he had to say about the Redeemer. And so, in the tradition of Advent we begin our Biblical journey in the writing of the prophet Isaiah.

Ahaz was king of Judah. The Lord God spoke to him. God's instruction was that Ahaz should ask for a sign of what was going to happen in the future. Ahaz declined the invitation. Ironically he declined for religious reasons. What Ahaz said was, I will not test God by making such a request. Here is a fundamental truth about our sinful nature. Sometimes we hide behind religiosity because we are afraid of

where the truth will lead us. That is what Ahaz did. He refused to ask for the sign that God invited him or directed him to request.

Isaiah scolded the king. And by the way, Isaiah eventually paid the ultimate price for scolding kings and prophesying concerning future events. He was martyred by Manasseh around 680 B.C. Isaiah said to Ahaz, “Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you also try the patience of God?” And with that Isaiah launches into a brief message about the coming sign that God will give the world. “The virgin will be with child, and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” Seven hundred years before the events occurred!

Four things to remember about Isaiah’s prophecy. Every word in that 14th verse is significant. First: this is not Isaiah’s opinion piece. He takes no credit whatsoever for what he is about to say. Isaiah speaks, but in the clearest language possible he says, “The Lord himself will give you a sign.” It is the first of the miracles that are part of the Christmas story, and I cannot make this distinction clearly enough or often enough. This is the first miracle in the Christmas history. The Lord himself announced to the world through HIS prophet what was going to happen long before it happened in Bethlehem. This sign is God’s revealing the coming of the Christ.

Second: There is nothing general or vague about this prophecy that it might be misinterpreted. “The virgin will be

with child.” The is called in English grammar, the definite article. What that means is that whenever that little word is used something very specific is being brought to our attention. The apple...means this apple...not the ones in the grocery store, or in the fruit bowl at home but this one. Isaiah delivers a message about a singular virgin who will be with child and have a son. He is foretelling Mary’s story, Joseph’s Mary. He talking about Mary in the time of Caesar Augustus in the time of the first great Roman census, the Mary who is considered by Joseph to have betrayed him, and who only saw things accurately after an angel addressed him. Mary who went with Joseph to Bethlehem where she gave birth.

Third: this virgin, gives birth to a son. This sign that God gave to Ahaz in spite of his objection and even rejection of it, is about Jesus. As the slogan rightly proclaims, HE is the reason for the season. Without Jesus there is no Advent or Christmas or Easter. Without Jesus there is no salvation from sin. Without Jesus there is no hope.

And Fourth: that singular virgin, will call her son Immanuel. Whether you spell it with an I or an E is probably the difference between Hebrew and Greek or Latin into which it was translated with the writing of the New Testament. The Son born of this virgin is called God with us. This is the miracle of what the Advent season celebrates in preparation. This is the miracle of Christmas. Jesus while obviously a man is more than mere flesh and blood. His divinity was not proclaimed only after

the resurrection but in fact 7 centuries before HIS birth and by his mother when HE was born. Jesus means God saves. The angel told the shepherds... "To you is born this day a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." And they rejoiced when they had been to Bethlehem that it was just as the angel had told them.

Christmas is the irresistible holy day. People will say they are not believers...and yet they will say... "It's Christmas!" ... as though that explains everything. Just maybe, maybe, by the grace of God it does. Because the result of studying Prophecy 101... is this...by the grace of God...it comes every year. Christmas.

Let us Pray;

Lord we bow before you in prayer giving thanks for the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. We give you thanks for the fact that Advent is now and as we celebrate through it we shall be led to Christmas, and we will sense the wonder of YOUR saving power. Bless our steps we ask, and lead us all the way. In Jesus reconciling name we ask. Amen