

Bible Readings

Old Testament Reading

Micah 5:1-5(a)

A Promised Ruler from Bethlehem

Marshal your troops now, city of troops, for a siege is laid against us.
They will strike Israel's ruler on the cheek with a rod.

² "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for
me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from
ancient times."

³ Therefore Israel will be abandoned
until the time when she who is in labor bears a son, and the rest of his
brothers return to join the Israelites.

⁴ He will stand and shepherd his flock
in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.

And they will live securely, for then his greatness
will reach to the ends of the earth.

⁵ And he will be our peace
when the Assyrians invade our land
and march through our fortresses

Isaiah 7:10-16

¹⁰ Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹ "Ask the Lord your God for a
sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."

¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test."

¹³ Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to
try the patience of humans?"

Will you try the patience of my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. ¹⁵ He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, ¹⁶ for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

Colossians 1:15-23

The Supremacy of the Son of God

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.

¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. ¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

²¹ Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. ²² But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—

²³ if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.

Sermon

Signs of the Messiah (Micah 5:1-5a & Isaiah 7:10-16 & Colossians 1:15-23) **13-Dec-20**

We'll be **looking at all 3 readings**, so please have your Bibles handy and open at the **1st passage from Micah chapter 5**.

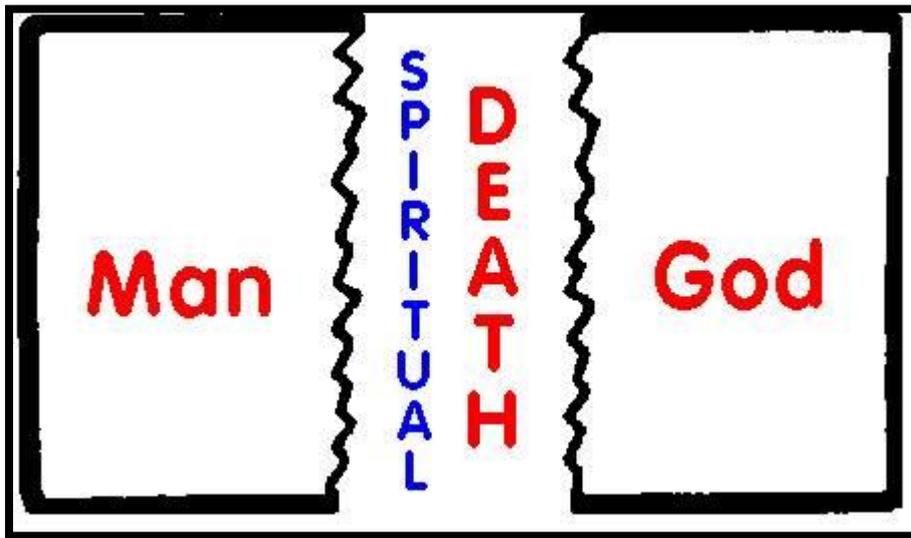
Let me **pray** before we begin...

Let's pray...

Intro

- Last week we saw the **fall of humans**
- The first humans - **Adam and Eve** - failed to **obey God's rules**
- Disobeying God's rules - meant **consequences**
- For the woman - it meant: **painful childbirth; raising children would be difficult** and there would be **tension in marriage** relationships
- For the man - it meant: living in a **broken world; hard work** to put food on the table
- And of course - both the man and the woman (and us for that matter) would **physically die one day**

[PowerPoint 1-Spiriutal Death]



- And there was also **spiritual death** - they were kicked out of the Garden - out of the close presence of God - and there was **no peace with God** - the **relationship between humans and God** was broken
- We also inherit Adam and Eve's **sinful nature**
- And because of our sin - we don't have peace with God - our **relationship is damaged**
- The situation cries out for someone to fix it - because we **can't fix this broken relationship ourselves** - because we **can't stop sinning**
- But God already knew that - and He **had a rescue plan in place**
- By sending a **Messiah**

[PowerPoint 2-Messiah]

[Explain what Messiah (Hebrew) and Christ (Greek) mean]

Messiah = Hebrew = Anointed/Chosen One

Christ = Greek for Messiah

Jesus is of course this promised **Messiah** - and we are counting down to Christmas - and the birth of Jesus - The Messiah.

In our **first reading** from **Micah 5** there's **something really important** about this promised Messiah...

If you'd like to turn to Micah 5

The Messiah is our Peace (Micah 5:1-5a)

God spoke through the Prophet Micah

Micah prophesied from **737 to 696BC** at a time when the **Assyrian empire** was rising to power

[PowerPoint 3-Micah]

- **See v1** - The prophet **Micah** speaks of a time when **Israel** is being **attacked by** a **foreign power** [most likely the **Assyrian army**] and even the **ruler** at the time [King Hezekiah] will be **struck on the cheek**.
- Should remind us of a greater King and ruler, Jesus, when **God's enemies struck him and humiliated him (Matthew 26:67; 27:26, 30)**
- **Israel** needn't **worry** though - **God is in control**.

- V2 - Micah prophesies of a ruler to be born in the town of **Bethlehem Ephrathah**
- **Bethlehem** is a new name for the old place named Ephrathah
- We know from the NT that **Jesus was born in Bethlehem** (Matthew 2:1) - and that's the promised ruler Micah is talking about - some **700 years before Jesus** was actually born
- The name, Bethlehem, means "House of Bread"
- The idea of "bread" should remind us of Jesus describing Himself as the bread of life (John 6:35). What Jesus means is - not that He is a loaf of bread - but that He is like our spiritual food - as we read and feed off God's Word - we are **being fed spiritually** - and **growing in our faith and understanding of God and His Son, Jesus**
- The old name **Ephrathah** means "place of fruitfulness"
- Bethlehem Ephrathah is certainly a fruitful place
- As well as being Jesus' birthplace - it's the hometown of Israel's most famous King - King David
- Bethlehem is also famous for **sheep** - being close to Jerusalem - the lambs used for sacrifices made in the temple at Jerusalem - **came from Bethlehem**
- **Jesus** is also described as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29) - He's the ultimate sacrificial lamb
- As well as being famous for **sheep and lambs** - **Bethlehem** had lots of **shepherds**

- And remember - **Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd** (John 10:11) - so it's fitting He should be born in Bethlehem - famous for shepherds and sheep - and where Jesus' ancestor **King David** was born
 - **And Jesus is no ordinary shepherd** - He will **grow up to lay down His life for the sheep** - that's us
 - **V2 also says this promised ruler has origins from ancient times** - it literally means His origin is everlasting
 - That means this promised ruler has always been around - even at the time God created the heavens and the earth
 - That means Jesus was there at the time of **Creation**
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- **V3 says Israel will be abandoned and without an earthly ruler** [remember Judah was exiled to Babylon in 587BC - and rest of Israel exiled to Assyria in 734-732BC] - until "she who is in labour" gives birth to the promised Messiah, Jesus - who remember is the King of Heaven and Earth - and so at His birth He brings His heavenly Kingdom to Earth and invites people to follow Him and enter His Kingdom.
 [And His Kingdom consists of 'the rest of his brothers (and sisters)' who return from their captivity to sin and return to the true Israelites (in a religious sense). This speaks of an elect remnant, that Jesus gathered and inaugurated His Kingdom when He sent the Holy Spirit on His brothers gathered in the upper room and they turned the world upside down (Luke 3:16 and Acts 2)]

- **V4 - This promised ruler - **Jesus** -will rule in the strength of the Lord and **rule in the majesty of the name of the Lord****
- **Still v4 - His subjects will live securely - because the enemy, Satan, is defeated by Jesus (Matthew 12:22-29)**

[The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our LORD Jesus be with you (Romans 16:20)]

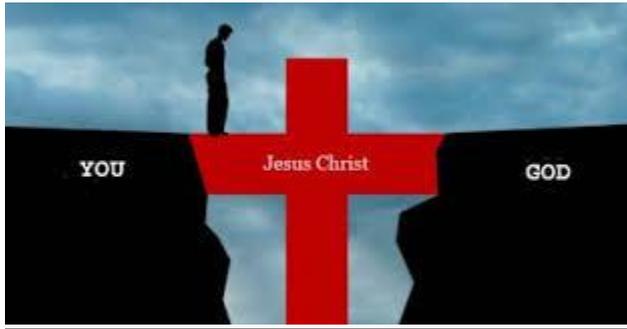
See also John 10:28 - I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.

And his greatness will reach the ends of the Earth - see Matthew 28:18-20 and John 17:2]

- **AND - most importantly - v5 - The **promise** is that the **Messiah, Jesus,** will be "our peace" - that's my first point!**
- Not peace in a military sense - **giving us peace from an enemy army like** the Assyrian army in Micah's time
- But peace between God and humankind
- That peace was only possible - because the **Messiah, Jesus,** fixed the problem that wrecked the peace between humans and God
- That **peace cost Him his life on the Cross**

[PowerPoint 4-Bridge]

- When Jesus died on that cross - He is like a bridge back to God



- Jesus can only make peace between us and God - by us accepting that Jesus is the bridge back to God - through His death and resurrection.
- Now we'd have to agree this year hasn't been very peaceful - has it?
- But the peace Jesus brings is - with God - and within us
- So, whatever is going on around us - as chaotic and as frustrating as this year has been
- Jesus gives a peace that is above all that - because His peace means we're forgiven and saved for Heaven - and no-one can take that from us - once we accept it (John 10:28)

The Messiah is "God with us" (Isaiah 7:10-16)

- But before Jesus can be our peace - He has to be born first
- So, our 2nd OT reading from Isaiah - will speak further about the birth of The Messiah...

[Please turn there now]

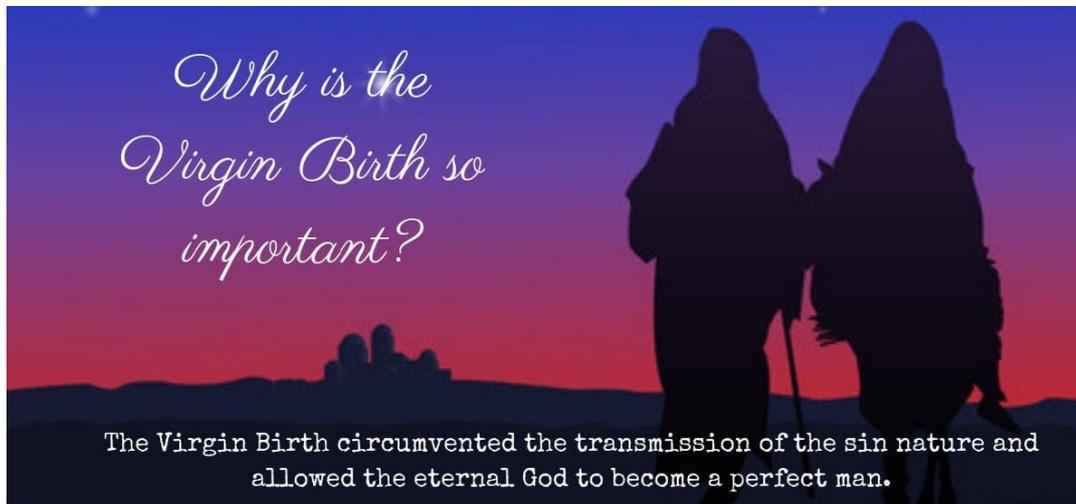
[PowerPoint 5-Isaiah]

- Isaiah prophesied from 740-700BC

- In the preceding verses (vv1-9), King Ahaz has been told to: **keep calm and not to be afraid** (v3) and that if he doesn't stand firm in his faith, he **will not stand** (v9)
- So here in vv10-11 God invites Ahaz to ask the Lord God for a sign [But it seems **faith doesn't play a part in Ahaz's religion** (see 2 Kings 16:2-4 - where it says Ahaz didn't follow the ways of the Lord - he made unauthorized sacrifices, even sacrificing his son in the fire!) and **faith played no part in his politics** either (see 2 Kings 16:7-10) where **his plan to outwit his enemies included making a deal with the largest of those enemies, Assyria.**]
- **Ahaz refuses to ask for a sign.**
- Why? It might sound like he is being super-spiritual by **saying he won't put the Lord to the test.**
- But it is not putting the Lord to the test, to do what the Lord has asked!
- **Ahaz refused to ask for a sign because when God fulfilled the sign, Ahaz would be "obligated" to belief and as we said earlier, he is not a man of faith!**
- Even though God's patience is tried by Israel
- **God's going to give them a sign anyway**
- **God's sign involves a solution that is not a military solution**
- God has in mind the birth of a son, who will fight a different sort of enemy.
- The sign God gives is - a **virgin will conceive and give birth to a son.**
- Of course, this is the birth of Jesus through the virgin Mary.

- Does it matter whether or not Jesus was born of a virgin?
- **Here's five reasons why it is important to believe in the **Virgin Birth**.**

[PowerPoint 6-Virgin]



- a. **[Jesus had a heavenly origin]** - The most important reason to hold the belief in the Virgin Birth concerns **Jesus' identity as God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity**. If Joseph were His true father, then **Jesus would be only a human being**. He would not be the Son of God as Scripture clearly states. **He would have had His beginning in time rather than eternally existing.**

But the Bible describes Jesus as God's Word -

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1)

And the Bible says Jesus, God's Word, became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14)

- b. **[Jesus had a sinless nature]** - A second reason why the Virgin Birth is important concerns the sinless character of Jesus. If Jesus had a human father, then He would have inherited a sinful nature as the rest of us

have. The Bible says. Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, . . . thus death spread to all, because all sinned (Romans 5:12).

On the contrary the Bible states that Jesus never sinned. Peter wrote, [Jesus] committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth (1 Peter 2:22).

And John tells us in 1 John 3:5: He appeared so that He might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.

- c. **[Jesus Was the Perfect Sacrifice]** - A third reason why the Virgin Birth is crucial to the Christian faith concerns our salvation. Without the sinlessness of Jesus there would be no salvation.

In the OT - God required an animal sacrifice to take care of sin - the animal **sacrificed had to be without blemish** (Exodus 12:5).

If Jesus were a sinner in any sense of the word, then **He could not provide salvation for us.** - because He wouldn't be without blemish.

However, because Jesus came into the world by supernatural means and lived a sinless life, **He could be that perfect sacrifice for our sins without spot and without blemish.**

The Bible makes this clear in 2 Cor 5:21: For God made him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

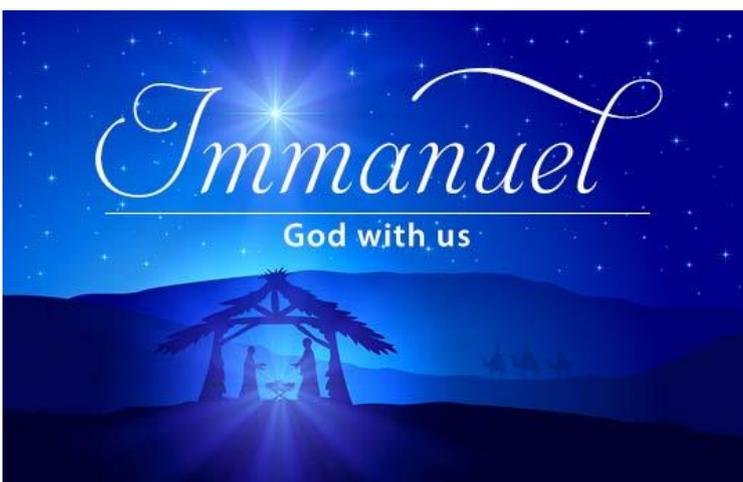
- d. **[It Shows the Uniqueness of Christ]** - A fourth reason why the Virgin birth is crucial is because the **virgin birth shows the uniqueness of Jesus.** No one else has ever come into the world the same way as Jesus. The

unique and miraculous nature of Jesus carried on through His entire life. His birth was a miracle, His public ministry consisted of miracles, Jesus miraculously lived a sinless life, He miraculously came back from the dead, and left this world in a miraculous way. From His entrance into this world until His departure, the life of Jesus Christ was a miracle.

e. [The Bible Says So] - The fifth reason to believe in the Virgin Birth is because the Bible says so. If Jesus were not actually born of a virgin then the Bible is wrong. If it is wrong concerning the Virgin Birth, then it is possible that it may be in error about other matters. Once the door opens to the possibility of error in Scripture the eventual and logical result is that the entire foundation of the Christian faith will crumble.

- And so, because the virgin birth is true
- The title given to the child to be born in Isaiah 7:14 - will be Immanuel - which of course means "God is with us" (see Matthew 1:23)

[PowerPoint 7]



- The baby to be born - baby Jesus - will be God with skin on

[V15-16 tell us that before the child is old enough to know and reject write and wrong the 2 Kings of the 2 counties, whom Ahaz dreads will be defeated. Sometimes prophecies in the Old Testament have a "now" element and a "not yet" element or to put it another way; a "near fulfilment" and a "far fulfillment".

Many commentators think that this was immediately fulfilled when a young woman in the royal household shortly married, conceived a son, and unknowingly naming him "Immanuel". Before this boy came to eat solid food, Israel and Syria [Ahaz's enemies] were be defeated [Isaiah 8]. It is also possible that God is just referring in a figurative way to a year or two period of time.

The name "Immanuel" was a rebuke to Ahaz. If 'God is with us' then why are you afraid Ahaz?

Also, the sign of a child also shows that the all-sovereign and all-knowing God has the situation completely under control and again is a rebuke of Ahaz's lack of faith.

Despite the near fulfilment of this prophecy in Isaiah's time]

- So, my second point is **The Messiah is "God with us"**

The Messiah "reconciles us to God" (Colossians 1:15-22)

- Which brings us to our NT passage from Colossians 1:15-22

[Please turn there now]

[PowerPoint 8-Colossians]

- This NT passage confirms that **Jesus had his origins from before creation**

Look at V15 - Jesus, the Son, is the image of the invisible God = the very nature and character of God have been perfectly revealed in Jesus. In Jesus, the invisible becomes visible.

Still v15 - Jesus is firstborn of all creation = the firstborn in the OT had a special place in the father's love (Exodus 4:22) and privileges. We need to be careful not to make this mean Jesus was the first of created beings because the context of the rest of this passage is that Jesus was there at creation and there before creation. (see v17)

See V16 - All things were created IN Him, THROUGH Him and FOR Him. Now remember Jesus is referred to as The Word (John 1:1-3, 14) - and remember God created everything through His Word, just by speaking!

- This passage also confirms that Jesus is fully God

See V19 - The fullness of God dwelled in Jesus at His birth. Therefore, Jesus is fully God as well as fully human.

- And this passage also confirms that Jesus fixed the broken relationship between God and humans
- We said earlier - Jesus is "our peace" - now you could have peace - just by calling a truce - but look at v20 - the peace Jesus brings is true reconciliation
- V20 says- He reconciled people with God by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. That's just amazing

[PowerPoint 9 - Reconciled]



- See V21 - **We were once alienated from God because of our evil sinful behaviour**
- But now - v22 - **we're reconciled**
- And this makes us Holy in God's sight - and without blemish - and free from accusation
- As our first hymn this morning says:
*Hark! The herald angels sing
 Glory to the new-born King;
 Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
 God and sinners reconciled!*
- So, my third point is **The Messiah reconciles us to God** - if we care to believe in Him

Response (Colossians 1:23)

So how should we respond to the Promised Messiah this morning?

Well, the **Apostle Paul** tells us in Col 1:23 - He says

- **Continue in our faith**

- Do not move from the hope (of Heaven) we get from the Gospel (Good News of Jesus)
- It's that Gospel that Paul has proclaimed to all the places he travelled to
- He's done that because he is a servant of the Gospel
- So, our response is to be like Paul's - and for us to be servants of the Gospel
- Our heartfelt desire must be that we don't want anyone to miss out on reconciliation with God
- Christmas time - Advent - is a **perfect time to share our faith in Jesus and the hope we have of Heaven**
- That faith and hope - begins with the birth of the Messiah, Jesus!
- Let's pray...