

Signs of the Messiah

(for sermon on 13th December- 2020)

From last week's study; why do we need a Messiah?

From last week's study we saw that the serpent (Satan) tempted Adam and Eve into eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This introduced sin and death into the world. It meant the world was broken, relationships were broken and most importantly it means human's relationship with God was also broken (a spiritual death).

This means we all sin today and we will all die one day too.

In Genesis 3:15 – God promises that a descendant of Eve, Jesus, will crush the serpent's (Satan) head even though the serpent (Satan) will bruise Jesus' heal. This is a prediction of Jesus' death on the cross crushing the power of sin and death once and for all. Because of Jesus' death, we have the gift of forgiveness and because He didn't stay dead, but rose 3 days later, we have eternal life – instead of dying.

That is God's wonderful grace.

Read Micah 5:1-5a

Micah prophesied from time of Jotham (740-732BC) to the time of Hezekiah (715-686BC) at a time when the Assyrians were rising to power

1. What is the problem in verse 1?

Israel is being attacked against a foreign power [most likely the Assyrian army] and even the ruler at the time [Hezekiah] will be struck on the cheek. It should remind us of the greater Son of David, when God's enemies struck him and humiliated him (Matthew 26:67; 27:26, 30)

2. What is promised in verse 2? What is the origin of that promised person?

Out of the town of Bethlehem Ephrathah [Old name for Bethlehem] in Judah will come a ruler.

He comes "for me" (for God) – He will not be a self-serving ruler.

And His origins are from old, ancient times.

The expression from ancient times when referred to God means everlasting (i.e. before Creation) – as in Psalm 90:2 - Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.)

3. What is Bethlehem famous for? (Ruth 1:6; 1 Samuel 16; 17:58; Matthew 2:5-6; John 7:42)

Bethlehem is the place that Rachel was buried (Genesis 35:19)

Bethlehem is the place where Naomi and Ruth returned to from Moab.

Bethlehem is the town of Jesse (David's father)

Bethlehem is famous for sheep – preparing the lambs for nearby Jerusalem for sacrifice at the temple.

Bethlehem is the town where Jesus was born.

4. What is significant about the meaning of the name, Bethlehem?

Bethlehem means "House of Bread"

Jesus refers to Himself in John 6:35 as the "Bread of Life"

The old name "Ephrathah" means "place of fruitfulness"

The birthplace of Jesus gave us someone who was immensely fruitful!

5. What is promised in verse 3?

Israel will be abandoned of an earthly king [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.

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)

6. What is promised in verse 4?

*The Promised Messiah will **stand and shepherd** His flock.*

A shepherd provides for His sheep – including spiritual food (John 10)

Hebrews 13:20 - Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our LORD Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,

1 Peter 5:4 - And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

*He will rule in the **strength of the Lord** and rule in the majesty of the name of the Lord*

*His **subjects will live securely** – because Satan is conquered (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.

7. What is promised in verse 5a? (cf. Isaiah 9:6; Luke 2:14; Colossians 1:19-20)

The promise is that the Messiah will be “our peace”

*Isaiah 9:6 – For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**.*

*Luke 2:14 – Glory to God in the highest heaven, and **on earth peace** to those on whom his favor rests.*

*Colossians 1:19-20 - For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, 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.***

8. How will this promised one, bring peace? (cf. Ephesians 2:14)

As well as bring peace with God

Jesus also knocks down the barrier between Jews and Gentiles; so that they can be one in Christ.

Read Isaiah 7:10-16

9. What does God invite Ahaz to do in verse 10 and 11?

In the preceding verses (vv1-9), 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 his 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, he Assyria.

10. What is Ahaz's reply in verse 12 and why?

He 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, he would be “obligated” to belief and as we said earlier, he is not a man of faith!

11. What is God’s complaint, through Isaiah, in verse 13?

God is wearied by the House of David’s (Judah). Not only do the rulers of Judah treat the people poorly, which is bad enough, they try the patience of the Lord.

12. What does God promise in verse 14? (cf. Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:31; 2:12)

God’s going to give them a sign.

While King Ahaz is calling in an army to fight his enemies.

God has in mind the birth of a son, who will fight a different sort of enemy.

The sign is a virgin will conceive and give birth to a son.

Of course, this is the birth of Jesus through the virgin Mary.

The importance of Jesus being born from a virgin is that

- a) The child was placed in Mary’s womb by the Holy Spirit – therefore God’s child and not fathered by a human father*
- b) Jesus was not born in sin; He had no sin nature (Hebrews 7:26) as it seems that the sinful nature comes through the earthly father (Romans 5:12, 17, 19).*
- c) By Mary being a virgin – it meant Jesus was born as a perfect sinless man*
- d) That’s important because then He is able to fulfill all of God’s promises, all of God’s Law perfectly and be the imperfect sinless sacrificial lamb on the cross, to take away our sin*
- e) Without the virgin birth – Jesus would not be perfect and could not make the once and for all sacrifice*

13. What is the name of the son to be born, in verse 14? Why is that name significant?

The name (title) this son is given is Immanuel which means “God is with us”.

So, Jesus is God with skin!

14. What is promised in verse 15 and 16? How is this fulfilled?

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.

Read Colossians 1:15-23

15. Summarize who and what Jesus, the Son of God is, in verses 15 to 20?

*V15 –He 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. No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son has made Him know (John 1:18)*

***The 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.*

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!

V17 – *Jesus is before all things = He was there before Creation. Jesus holds all things together. He did this by reconciling humans back to God, on the cross.*

V18 – *Jesus is the Head of the body; the body being the church. Jesus established His church (non-denominational) and He even died for His church. His church is the vehicle He uses to establish His kingdom and spread the Gospel.*

He is the beginning and firstborn from among the dead = Jesus as the first to be risen from the dead (remember Lazarus eventually died again). Jesus is the firstfruits of the resurrection that guarantees the future resurrection of others (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

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

V20 – *He reconciles humans with God and brings peace with God. He made this peace by His death on the cross.*

16. How does 1 Colossians 1:15-20 relate to Micah 5:1-5a and Isaiah 7:10-16?

As Micah says - the Promised Ruler had His origins from old, from ancient times. This agrees with Colossians saying He was there at Creation.

As Micah says – The Promised Ruler will be a shepherd who shepherds His flock and has the strength and majesty of the name of the Lord. Colossians says all the fulness of God dwells in Jesus.

As Micah says – The Promised Ruler will be our peace – Colossians 1:20 says Jesus makes peace through His blood shed on the cross.

Isaiah says – the child to be born will be called Immanuel – God with us. And Colossians says Jesus was the Creator God, and that the fulness of God dwelled in Him. So, when Jesus was born, he really was “God with us”.

17. What were we before becoming Christians, according to verse 21?

We were alienated from God – and enemies – because of our evil behaviour = i.e. our sin.

18. What has changed, according to verse 22? How?

We are reconciled back to God.

Jesus death to take away our sin – means we are presented to God as if we’d never sinned and free from accusation or guilt. We are actually presented to God as holy and blameless. Wow!

19. What does our response to what Jesus has done, look like in verse 23?

It looks like continuing in our faith – which is established and firm.

20. According to verse 23, what does the Gospel give us?

The Gospel gives us hope. Remember though, it is a certain hope, because of Jesus.

21. What does Paul mean in verse 23 when he says the Gospel has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven?

Paul is saying here that the Gospel has been proclaimed across the Roman Empire – the world as he knows it. It does not mean that every single individual has heard the Gospel, but that he has fulfilled his calling to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles. We are that same calling – see Matthew 28:16-20.

22. How does Paul describe himself in verse 23? How does that relate to us? (cf. Colossians 1:25 and 1 Corinthians 3:5)

He describes himself as a servant. We too are servants of the Gospel of Jesus (see 2 Corinthians 6:4) Colossians 1:25 – I [Paul] have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness

1 Corinthians 3:5 - What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task.

23. What good news is there in Colossians 1:15-23 that we could share with people this Christmas & beyond? *Jesus created everything. He holds everything together in this world (despite its brokenness) and He fixes (reconciles) the broken relationship between humans and God. He was born as God with skin on to grow up and die for the sin of the world to be forgiven and to give us a ticket to Heaven.*

Finish in prayer: Thanking God that Jesus is the fulfilment of the prophecies in the Old Testament.