

Do You See What I See?

by Jeff Strite
Isaiah 7:1-7:14

OPEN: Sing this with me:

"Said the night wind to the little lamb
Do you see what I see?
Way up in the sky little lamb
DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?
A star, a star dancing in the night,
with a tail as big as a kite,
with a tail as big as a kite

"Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy
Do you hear what I hear?
Ringing through the sky shepherd boy?
DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?
A song, a song high above the trees,
with a voice as big as the sea,
with a voice as big as the sea

Said the shepherd boy to the mighty king
Do you know what I know?
In your palace warm mighty king.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT I KNOW?
A child, a child shivers in the cold
Let us bring him silver and gold,
Let us bring him silver and gold

Those are the first 3 - of the 4 verses - of the song "Do you hear what I hear?"
Did you notice the sections of each verse that I highlighted?

Do you SEE what I see?
Do you HEAR what I hear?
Do you KNOW what I know?

The last verse has the mighty king declaring: "LISTEN to what I say!"

What's this song about?
It's about Jesus isn't it?
It's about His birth
The singer is declaring:
"I've seen. I've heard. I know..."

Therefore: listen to what I say!!!!”

It’s a Christmas song of Praise to Jesus.
Because Jesus is the “reason for the season.”

ILLUS: I read the true story of a woman who entered her local library and said
“I’d like to find a book on the ‘real meaning of Christmas.’ Nothing religious
though.”

Now does that strike you as odd?
Of course it does, because the “real meaning” of Christmas is all about the baby
Jesus born to a virgin.

And that’s what PART of our scripture is about this morning:
“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him
Immanuel.” Isaiah 7:14

Isn’t that cool?
About 700 years before Jesus was born, God makes this declaration.
There’s going to be a virgin.
She’s not known a man and she’s going to give birth to a child.
And they’ll call Him Immanuel... which means “God with us”.

ILLUS: I read the true story of a church where the teachers helped their Sunday
School kids stage an impromptu Christmas pageant. The teachers had read the
story to the children and provided them with some props; then they stood to the
side and let the kids dramatize what they’d heard.
One girl grabbed the doll and said, “I’ll be Mary.”
A boy cried out, “I’ll be Joseph,”
Some found some bathrobes and said, “We’ll be the shepherds.”
Everyone was either a lamb, or a wise man, or an angel or something else.
But one little girl had no part, so she said,
“I’ll be the doctor who delivered the baby Jesus.”
So they all took their places.
Mary had a sofa pillow under her shirt.
And Joseph led Mary to the MEAN innkeeper who sent them away.
When the time came, the “doctor” took the doll from Mary’s pillow and held it up.
Joseph, wanting to act like a new papa said, “What is it, doc?”
The little doctor smiled and said, “Why it’s a...God.”
(David O. Dykes, sermoncentral.com)

Jesus – born of a virgin.
Born to be Immanuel.
Born to be “God with us.”

Now, what's really interesting is the series of events that led up to this prophecy:
It all has to do with a King named Ahaz
Ahaz... was a very religious man.
In fact, he worshipped a multitude of gods.
But there was one God he would not worship. Do you have any idea who THAT God was? That's right: the God of Israel.

Ahaz WAS religious. It's just that he wasn't religious toward the God of his fathers.

And because Ahaz rejected the LORD...II Chronicles 28:19 tells us:
"The LORD had humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had promoted wickedness in Judah and had been most unfaithful the LORD."

Ahaz reigned in Judah for 16 years and made every effort during his reign to destroy the religious foundations of the nation.

- He locked up the gates of the temple
- He melted down the Temple vessels for the gold and silver in them.
- He offered burnt incense on high places throughout Judah (which the Law explicitly condemned).
- And he set up altars on his roof so he could worship stars, moon and sun.

II Kings 16:2-4 tells us "... Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son in the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites."

Isaiah 8:19 even implies that Ahaz ALSO sought to speak with the dead to find out his future.

(pause) Well, now (in Isaiah 7) Ahaz's future has come knocking on his door. And it's not a pretty picture. The future has come to Ahaz... and he is in serious trouble.

Two of his arch-enemies - Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the king of Israel had marched against Judea and were even now at the very gates of Jerusalem.

Now, these nations had gone to war against Ahaz in the past and Judah had suffered terribly. In the past 120,000 of Ahaz's soldiers were killed in a single day and 200,000 more of his people had been carried into captivity.

Now Rezin and Pekah are preparing to come back for seconds, and Ahaz is afraid. So he decides that his best option was to look for an ally that was big enough to help him defeat his enemies, and he appeals to Tiglath Pileser, the King of the Assyrians.

This was a really bad idea.

Assyria was an extremely vicious and wicked nation.

And on top of that it turned out this alliance did Ahaz more harm than good.

"Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came to him and distressed him, and did not assist him."

2 Chronicles 28:20

Assyria never helped Ahaz defeat his enemies. But they still forced King Ahaz to pay "protection money" to protect his nation from Assyria's soldiers, and Judah became a vassal state.

However, before Ahaz sealed his bargain with Assyria, God wanted to offer him another option. God sent Isaiah and to tell Ahaz the invasion he feared was NOT gonna happen. Neither Rezin nor Pekah would live another two years. And sure enough: within that period of time, both were assassinated.

2ndly God offered Ahaz assurance that he would do as He promised:

He tells Ahaz: ask me for a sign – any sign. It can be as deep as the depths of the sea, or as high as the heavens. Just ask for a sign so that you'll know I'll do what I say

JUST DON'T MAKE THE CONTRACT WITH ASSYRIA!

But Ahaz turns God down.

He gives a pious excuse "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test." Isa 7:12

But Ahaz truly hates the God of Israel. So... he just politely tells Isaiah (and his God) to go take a hike.

Ahaz didn't really believe Isaiah's God could do anything, so he's not interested. He's just like the atheist who said he doesn't believe in God. The only difference was that Ahaz has the trappings of being religious (many gods)... but as far as the God of Israel goes Ahaz doesn't believe. He's basically just like an atheist

So God says "Fine. If you don't want to ask for a sign... I'm going to give you one anyway" "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

But Ahaz just turned away and ignored God.

He didn't believe the prophecy.

He refused to accept the proclamation that a virgin would be with child.

And (you know) there are people today who don't believe it either.

When they hear about the virgin birth – many people (even religious people) turn away in disbelief.

ILLUS: Several years back someone asked over 7000 Protestant clergy if they believed in the virgin birth. Of those interviewed, they found that the following percentages of clergy from the following denominations did NOT believe that Jesus was born of a virgin:

American Lutherans 19% (not all Lutherans – just that particular group)

American Baptists 34%, (not all Baptists – just that denomination)

Episcopalians 44%,

Presbyterians 49%,

Methodists 60%

(from sermon by Gerald Fury on Sermoncentral.com in 2004)

What's going on here??

These are PREACHERS! Isn't there some kind of contract you have to sign that says you believe what the Bible says about stuff like this? How could they reject something so obviously in Scripture?

Well, because they're just like Ahaz. Those preachers who VERY religious but - for all intents and purposes – they don't believe anything!

They SAY they believe in God... but they don't really believe in a God who matters. They have no faith in a God that really means anything. Like Ahaz, these preachers are VERY religious on the OUTSIDE but on the INSIDE they have no faith. They are theological atheists.

Now, why should it matter whether Jesus was born of a virgin?

Well, first... that's what the Bible says.

If that's what the Bible says, shouldn't we believe that?

Shouldn't I (as your preacher) believe it and preach it?

Of course we should!

But that still doesn't answer the question: Why does it matter?

What difference does it make that Jesus would be born of a virgin?

Well, it makes a difference because God had made a promise way back in Genesis 3.

You remember that don't you?

Adam and Eve ate of a fruit they were forbidden to eat, and God decreed punishments against them.

But there was another actor in that drama.

Who else was there in the Garden?

That's right – Satan.

And God turned to Satan and He says: "I will put enmity (hatred) between you and the woman, and between your seed and HER SEED; He shall bruise your head, and

you shall bruise His heel." Genesis 3:15

Who exactly was this seed of the woman God's talking about here?

That's right – it's Jesus.

It's the very first prophecy of the coming of Christ to die for our sins. And God was telling Satan, there will come a time when the seed of a woman is going to deal you a mortal blow. You'll hurt him (bruise his heel) but he'll crush you.

When was this going to happen?

On the cross. It was there that Jesus went thru the agony of torture and death. But in His resurrection He destroyed "... him who holds the power of death— that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14)

(PAUSE)

But now wait a minute... the "woman's Seed"?

That's odd. Usually Scripture says "the seed of the father" or "the seed of Aaron."

It's always a "male thing."

But here it's different – this is the seed of a woman?

It doesn't even say "the seed of a MAN and a WOMAN."

Why? Well, because there wasn't going to a MAN involved in this. The baby Jesus was NOT to have a human father.

Matthew 1:20 tells us that "... an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

But why would God do it THAT WAY? Why would there be no mortal father?

Well, because Isaiah 59:16-17 tells us "(God) saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm achieved salvation for him, and his own righteousness sustained him. He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak."

God looked all through heaven and could find no one who could fix the problem. The problem was sin. If no one could be found to intercede for mankind our fate would be to die for our sins. But there was no one to be found who could deal with the sins of men. No one who could intercede for us
God could find now one... so He did it Himself.
God stepped down out of heaven to bring us salvation.

But now... there's a problem here. God was the only one righteous enough to offer Himself for us as our pure sacrifice for sin but the problem was: God can't die. He

couldn't just step down out of heaven and become our sacrifice for sins because He could not be put to death.

But now, mortals - they CAN die. But there isn't a human righteous enough to take our place. No matter how nice you may be you have sin in YOUR life so there's no way you could die for me. Your life is tainted with your OWN sin. And I'm a pretty nice fellow. Do you think I could die in your place? Oh, no? Why not? That's right, because I'm as tainted by sin in my life as you are in yours.

But God had a plan.

When Jesus was born He was born to be human (the child of Mary) and He was born to be GOD (of the Holy Spirit). In that one mortal body, Jesus was both fully human and fully God.

He was mortal – so He could die.

But He was also God – so He was righteous enough to take your place and mine.

Did you HEAR that?

Did you SEE that?

Do you KNOW that?

If you've heard, seen and know that this is true... it's time for you and I to say to others: "LISTEN, because I've got something to tell you."

CLOSE: Now the world doesn't like to hear us talking about that.

The world does NOT like to LISTEN to that story.

The world tries to crowd us out, to shut down Christmas, to ignore the baby born of a virgin.

But that's alright... you tell them anyway.

If you've heard it, seen it, and know it... tell them about it.

ILLUS: Do you know who Tim Tebow is?

That's right, he's a famous football quarterback. But he's known for something else. Tim Tebow loves to tell others about Christ.

Jake Plummer, a former Broncos Quarterback was asked about Tebow in an interview. He said:

"Tebow, regardless of whether I wish he'd just shut up after a game and go hug his teammates, I think he's a winner and I respect that about him. I think that when he accepts the fact that we know that he loves Jesus Christ, then I think I'll like him a little better. I don't hate him because of that, I just would rather not have to hear that every single time he takes a good snap or makes a good handoff.

Asked about Plummer's remarks in an interview on ESPN's First Take, Tebow said:

"If you're married, and you have a wife, and you really love your wife, is it good enough to only say to your wife 'I love her' the day you get married? Or should you

tell her every single day when you wake up and every opportunity?

"And that's how I feel about my relationship with Jesus Christ is that it is the most important thing in my life. So any time I get an opportunity to tell him that I love him or given an opportunity to shout him out on national TV, I'm gonna take that opportunity."

INVITATION