

Christmas, An Invitation to a Miracle

Text: Isaiah 7:14, "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Miracles are associated with Christmas. You cannot even take a causal reading of Matthew 1 and 2 or Luke 1 and 2, the chapters that encompass the Christmas event, without seeing miracle after miracle. Zacharias and Elizabeth conceive John the Baptist far beyond their natural ability to do so. Gabriel talks to Zacharias, then he talks to Mary. Mary, the virgin conceives and gives birth to the Christ-child. Angels announce in the sky above the Judean hills to a group of shepherds that Christ has come. A star guides the wise men from the east and they find Jesus. God speaks to the wise men not return to murderous Herod. And they go home another way, preserving the safety of our Lord. John W. Peterson, the premier composer of Christian music in the mid and latter half of the 20th Century was writing a cantata and had a difficult time with the name. Late one night while traveling he heard a preacher talking about the first Christmas. As the preacher listed the miracles happening on the original Christmas night, in excitement he said, "Why, miracles were just popping out everywhere!" Then he got the idea for the name of his cantata, "Night of Miracles." We have still not gotten over the miracles of Christmas, have we? And I pray we never get over miracles and Christmas. And although I have not yet heard the Christmas cantata our choir is performing tonight, I love the title, "An Invitation to a Miracle."

In our text found in Isaiah 7:14 it says, "...the Lord Himself shall give you a sign...." The word for "sign" in Hebrew can just as easily be translated "miracle." There are two common words found in the Bible from which we translate the word "miracle." One is the Hebrew word "pawlaw" meaning things accomplished that are determined wonderful, hard, difficult, great, too high, marvelous or miraculous. The other word is the Greek word "semeion" meaning miracle, sign, token or wonder. As we see these definitions we are reminded of Isaiah 9:6: "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." Notice the first name given to Jesus prophetically in this verse is "Wonderful." When we go to our English definitions of "miracle," we see the meaning has not changed, only ramified for our understanding. Our English definitions say a miracle is a surprising and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore considered to be the work of a divine

agency. Also it is defined as a highly improbable or extraordinary event, development, or accomplishment that brings very welcome consequences. The Latin root is “miraculum” meaning object of wonder. This is the Latin variation of “mirari” which means to wonder and “mirus” which means “wonderful.”

Isaiah 7:14 tells us, “...the Lord Himself...” is involved in this miracle. He tells us the main truth of the miracle is that a supernaturally born Child is promised. And miracle of all miracles, this Child coming is none other than God Himself incarnate! Thus the name given: “Immanuel”, meaning “God with us.”

In the times of the Judges, Gideon is chosen by God. In Judges 6:13, his exasperation is recorded: “And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt? but now the LORD hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.” This seems the cry of the skeptical world we live in today, “Where are the miracles?” Let’s talk about it:

1. A MIRACLE ARRESTS OUR ATTENTION.

John 6:2, “And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.”

2. MIRACLES CONFIRM THE WORKINGS OF GOD.

John 3:2: “The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.”

John 6:14: “Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”

Acts 2:22, “Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.”

Mark 16:17, “And these signs shall follow them that believe....”

Mark 16:20, “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.”

Acts 8:6, “And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.”

Acts 26:26, "For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner."

John 7:31: "And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?"

3. A MIRACLE IS NEVER ON DISPLAY TO SATISFY OUR CURIOSITY.

Luke 23:8 and 9, "And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing."

4. UNBELIEF HAS THE ABILITY TO RESTRAIN MIRACLES.

Matthew 13:58: "And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

Psalms 78:41: "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel."

5. WHEN A MIRACLE FROM GOD IS NOT EMBRACED THE HEART IS HARDENED.

Mark 6:52: "For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened."

6. NOT EVERYTHING THAT APPEARS MIRACULOUS IS FROM GOD.

Revelation 16:14: "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

1 John 4:1: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

7. CHRISTMAS IS GOD'S INVITATION TO HIS TRIUMVIRATE OF MIRACLES

A. God was born.

Matthew 1:23: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

John 1:14: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

B. God died.

John 1:4, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”

John 10:17, 18a: “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again...”

C. God rose from the dead.

Revelation 1:18, “I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Acts 2:24: “Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.”

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in black ink and features a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right from the end of the name.