

¹⁰ Moreover the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; ask it either in the depth or in the height above." ¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" ¹³ Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! *Is it* a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Introduction

Christmas is a very important time in the Church Calendar.

It is also a very important time in the business Calendar.

Some companies do 40% of their years' business in December.

Preparing for Christmas is a big thing for lots of people.

All over the world as I speak, millions of people are preparing for Christmas.

Some men in England only prepare for Christmas on Christmas Eve.

They rush out and buy their wives perfume or something that they think they might like.

However, like my Mother used to do, some people prepare for Christmas about 1 year in advance.

In England after Christmas they sell off Christmas things at least 50% off.

My Mother being a "canny" (Scottish word for careful) Scottish lady used to buy most of our Christmas presents and Christmas crackers in the January sales.

She used to hide them in a large suitcase in the attic/loft (room in the roof)

I only discovered this secret when I was a teenager.

However, Christmas was so important in the heart of the God of the Bible, that He started his preparations a very long time ago.

It is these preparations, revealed through prophecy, that will be our main focus this morning. There are so many prophecies in the Old Testament concerning Christmas, but today I plan just to cover one of these in full.

The first promise of the coming Messiah into this world was actually made way back in Genesis Chapter 3: v. 15.

According to Jewish Hebrew Scholars this was about 7,000 years ago.

Read Genesis Chapter 3: v. 13-15 in (N.K.J.)

¹³ And the LORD God said to the woman, "What *is* this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." ¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent:

"Because you have done this,
You *are* cursed more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you shall go,
And you shall eat dust
All the days of your life.

¹⁵ And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel."

It is not obvious when you read these verses that God is telling us about a future time when Jesus would be born.

Let us just examine v. 14-15 very closely.

The promise by God had 2 parts.

1. A promise made to the devil and his followers.
2. A promise made to the woman about her seed and her male offspring.

God promised that there would be a continuous war between the offspring of Eve and the devil and all his offspring or followers.

God promised that although the devil would hurt one of Eve's offspring by bruising His heel, it would not be fatal.

However, the strike to the head of the devil would be fatal.

Although this is a prophecy about the death and resurrection of Jesus and the destroying of Satan, nevertheless it also includes the birth of Jesus from the seed of the woman.

We all know that it is from the **seed of a man** planted into the womb of a woman, that a baby starts to grow.

However, we are told that it is the **"seed of the woman"**.

God would need to plant that seed through a miracle in order for that to happen.

So we have the first indication of a **"Virgin"** birth coming in the future, about 7,000 years before it actually happens.

The man born through that virgin birth would destroy Satan, and although the man would be hurt, it would not be a fatal blow.

Genesis Chapter 3: v.15 reveal to us that preparations for Christmas were revealed in the Bible to those who read the Jewish "Torah".

Moses may not have understood all of these details, but with our knowledge of the whole Bible and the historical Jesus, it is not hard for us to grasp the significance of this verse.

I would like to focus today on a prophecy in the book of Isaiah concerning Christmas.

Turn with me to Isaiah Chapter 7: v. 14.

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

The Prophet Isaiah was writing this nearly 6,000 years before the birth of Jesus.

God spoke through Isaiah to give us an amazing and accurate picture of what the first Christmas was all about.

Isaiah said that the birth of Jesus would be a sign.

We find a connection with this prophecy in Luke 2: v. 10-12.

¹⁰ Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. ¹¹ For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

¹² And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

God has always used **"signs"** to get people's attention and to deliver His message to mankind. Even miracles in John's Gospel are called signs.

(John 2: v. 11)

¹¹ This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

Isaiah says in Chapter 7: v.14 " ...the Lord Himself will give you a sign..."

Q. What is the birth of Jesus a sign of?

1. A Sign of God's Power.

Isaiah prophesied about a "Virgin" conceiving and having a son.

Isaiah says **"Behold the virgin shall conceive..."**

This was a prophecy about a super-natural birth.

The first Christmas was going to be an amazing display of God's power.

The sign that God was going to give the world 6,000 years later was going to be a demonstration of God's power.

It is an amazing thing when a baby is born in the natural way, through the seed of a man, through sexual intercourse.

The seed is so small that we can't actually see it with our eyes.

It usually takes 9 months to grow inside the womb. Then a baby is born.

The baby then is absolutely unique in every way.

The Bible says that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, and that is true.

However, in this case God was going to plant the seed.

The "Virgin Birth" is an amazing thing, and it is a sign of God's power.

When we celebrate Christmas, we also celebrate the fulfilment of this amazing prophecy.

The Virgin birth is an absolutely essential part of the Christmas story.

If Jesus was born naturally, through the seed of a man, then he would have a sinful nature, and his death would NOT accomplish anything.

Romans 5: v. 12 in the N.L.T.

¹² When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

Jesus had to leave Heaven and come into this world 100% pure and Holy.

It has always been God's revealed will in the Bible that the punishment for sin would be death.

Before the death of Jesus, God allowed forgiveness for sins, through the death of an animal.

The animal died in the place of the person who committed sins.

The purpose of the virgin birth was for Jesus to remain 100% Holy, so that he could pay the substitutionary price for our death, that is the punishment we deserve for our sins.

Jesus could only do this if He came into this world in a super-natural way through a "**Virgin Birth**" (N/T reference Matt. 1: v. 18-25. – N.K.J.)

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. ²⁰ But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." ²² So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." ²⁴ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, ²⁵ and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS.

So the first sign was the sign of God's power to bring about a virgin birth and allow the Saviour of the world to grow normally inside the womb of a virgin.

2. **A Sign of God's Love**

Isaiah says that the child born to this virgin was to be called "Immanuel".

The word "Immanuel" means "God with us".

It is a promise that God will appear in human form.

If you know the Old Testament well, you will know that it records incidents of God appearing to people as a person.

In Gen.3: v.8

⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

God is walking in the garden and He spoke to Adam and Eve.

Later in Genesis Chapter 18 v. 1-3, God appeared to Abraham.

Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre,^[a] as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. ²So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, ³and said, “My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.

Finally, in Joshua Chapter 5: v. 13-15 God appears to Joshua and claims to be the commander of the army of the Lord.

¹³ And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, “Are You for us or for our adversaries?” ¹⁴ So He said, “No, but *as* Commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, “What does my Lord say to His servant?” ¹⁵ Then the Commander of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, “Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand *is* holy.” And Joshua did so.

In the case of Abraham and Joshua the appearance of God came and went away quickly.

So the question that we need to ask here is, what is **unique about the appearance of Jesus at Christmas?**

Why is this **different** from the other appearances of Jesus in the Old Testament?

The difference with the Christmas appearance of Jesus is that Jesus actually became a **“Real Person”**.

The theological word that is used for this is **“The Incarnation”**.

This means God becoming flesh and blood just like us.

When you think about this, it is a very big thing for the creator of the world to do.

One of the most well know verses in the New Testament is John 3: v. 16.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

It was because of God’s great love for His created mankind that He was willing to do this **great thing of becoming a man.**

God loved us so much that He was willing to take human form that He might be able to pay our “sin debt”.

Philippians 2: v. 5-8. (N.K.J.)

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

James Montgomery Boice said this:

“Jesus endured a **human birth** to give us a **spiritual birth**.

He occupied a **stable** so that we might occupy a **mansion**.

He had an **earthly Mother** so that we might have a **heavenly Father**.

He became **subject to humanity** that we might **become free**.

He **left His glory** in order to **give us His glory**.

He was **poor** that we might **become rich**.

He was **hunted by Herod** that we might be **delivered from Satan**.

It was a reversal of roles, at God’s cost, for our benefit.

(From the Christ at Christmas, Chicago: Moody, 1983, p.59.)

3. **A sign of God's faithfulness**

There is one sure thing about the God of the Bible.

Whenever He makes a promise, He is always faithful to deliver that promise in His timing.

Christmas is a sign of God's faithfulness.

God's faithfulness is an integral part of His nature.

Numbers 23: v.19. (N.L.T.)

¹⁹ God is not a man, so he does not lie.

He is not human, so he does not change his mind.

Has he ever spoken and failed to act?

Has he ever promised and not carried it through?

God's faithfulness is known through His fulfilled promises.

Let me give you one other example from the Old Testament.

In Genesis Chapter 12: v. 1-3, God made some promises to Abraham.

Now the LORD had said to Abram:

"Get out of your country,

From your family

And from your father's house,

To a land that I will show you.

² I will make you a great nation;

I will bless you

And make your name great;

And you shall be a blessing.

³ I will bless those who bless you,

And I will curse him who curses you;

And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Here are the promises:

1. **I will make you a great nation.** In spite of all the problems that the Jewish nation has had in its history, God has kept his promise. This is in spite of thousands of years of persecution, in which millions of Jews have been murdered, for no other reason, other than that they are God's chosen people. Today the Jewish people are still a great nation, although some are scattered all over the world. God has kept His promise.
2. **I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing.**
The nation of Israel and Jewish people have been a blessing to the world.
The list of how Israel has blessed the world since it became a nation in its own right over 50 years ago is amazing. The list is too long to quote.
However, recently, children injured in the Syrian Civil war, are receiving life-saving treatment in Israel.
Developing nations feed their hungry using **Israeli expertise.**
Countries caught in drought, now grow crops thanks to **innovations from Israel.**
The following people are thankful for inventions from Israel:
Wheelchair bound people, and physically disabled people, burn victims, those suffering from cancer, post- traumatic stress, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and many more.
Israel's disaster relief is the **best in the world.** They received a world honour after their response to the Haiti earthquake disaster.
We rarely hear about these things in the news but they are a sign of God's faithfulness to His promise to Abraham.
The Jewish people have always been a blessing to the world.
3. **I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you.**
I won't go into any specific cases here but there is strong evidence today that God is still honouring this promise and blessing **individuals and nations that support Israel.**

4. In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

It is through Jesus Christ that the world is really blessed today.

If it wasn't for Christmas, there would be no Jesus to save us, forgive us, take our punishment and give us eternal life with new bodies, fit for eternity.

This is the greatest blessing of all, and it is because of God's faithfulness.

The greatest blessing for mankind today is Jesus Christ.

He came into this world at Christmas, but He is alive today, because He rose from the dead.

There is no doubt about it that Jesus Christ is the ultimate evidence of God's faithfulness.

So what practical applications can we make for our lives today from this prophecy of Isaiah about Christmas?

1. All the prophecies about the first coming of Jesus were 100% accurate and have been fulfilled. Therefore, with confidence, we must look forward to the second coming of Jesus. This is the next big event in God's schedule.

Christmas is a past event. The second coming of Jesus is a future event.

People today don't mind hearing about the Christmas story.

It is a non-threatening event.

However, the signs of the second coming of Jesus are a challenge to the world. They are very threatening and real. We are living in the **pre-second coming signs today.**

Just as Isaiah prophesied about "signs" of the first coming, so Jesus prophesied about the "signs" of the second coming.

Let us look briefly at some of the signs that Jesus gave us:

Turn to Matthew Chapter 24: v. 3-14 –in the N.K.J.

³ Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" ⁴ And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. ⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these *are* the beginning of sorrows. ⁹ "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

1. Deception is a sign of the second coming of Jesus.

False prophets and even people claiming to be Jesus will rise up and deceive many. Today deception is world-wide.

Many people are deceived today and follow movements that claim to be Christian, but they are not. They proclaim another gospel.

There are some very rich false prophets in our world today.

Beware of the prosperity gospel and also of giving money to people in these movements, who claim that you will receive back material wealth. I have copied into the sermon notes a good exposition of the prosperity movement for you to read.

This is a big sign from Jesus, be alive to this deception.

Copied from Wikipedia, very accurate statement.

Prosperity theology (sometimes referred to as the **prosperity gospel**, the **health and wealth gospel**, or the **gospel of success**)^[A] is a religious **belief** among some Christians, who hold that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of **God** for them, and that **faith**, positive speech, and donations to religious causes will increase one's material wealth. Prosperity

theology views the Bible as a contract between God and humans: if humans have faith in God, he will deliver security and prosperity.

The doctrine emphasizes the importance of personal [empowerment](#), proposing that it is God's will for his people to be happy. The [atonement](#) (reconciliation with God) is interpreted to include the alleviation of sickness and poverty, which are viewed as [curses](#) to be broken by faith. This is believed to be achieved through donations of money, visualization, and positive confession.

It was during the [Healing Revivals](#) of the 1950s that prosperity theology first came to prominence in the United States, although commentators have linked the origins of its theology to the [New Thought](#) movement which began in the 19th century. The prosperity teaching later figured prominently in the [Word of Faith](#) movement and 1980s [televangelism](#). In the 1990s and 2000s, it was adopted by influential leaders in the [Pentecostal Movement](#) and [Charismatic Movement](#) in the United States and has spread throughout the world. Prominent leaders in the development of prosperity theology include [E. W. Kenyon](#), [Oral Roberts](#), [A. A. Allen](#), [Robert Tilton](#), [T. L. Osborn](#), [Joel Osteen](#), [Creflo Dollar](#), [Kenneth Copeland](#), [Reverend Ike](#) and [Kenneth Hagin](#).

Prosperity theology has been criticized by leaders from various Christian denominations, including within the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, who maintain that it is irresponsible, promotes [idolatry](#), and is contrary to scripture.

2. **Wars and Rumors of wars** – A Rumor of a war is happening today concerning N. Korea. There are literally hundreds of wars taking place in our world today. This is a sign.

3. **Famines, Pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.**

There are now 500 earthquakes each year that cause some damage and 100 each year that cause more damage. There are 20 each year now that are very serious with loss of life and serious damage.

Compared to 1950 this is an increase of 400%

Pest control has now become a problem and famines are on the increase.

4. **Lawlessness** – You do not have to go far in the world to find crime.

It is everywhere in the world. Even in Japan which is one of the safest places in the world, and has the lowest rate of murder per 100,000 of population, still has over 500 murders each year. Many are not reported on T.V. or in the media.

5. **The Gospel will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations.** – This is where Christians like us must play our part in being one of these signs. We must take the pure “Gospel” of God’s grace to the nations. It is not easy, but we must try.

Christmas is a great time to share the gospel with the people of Osaka. If 12 people came to the OIC Carol Singing on Wednesday 20th December, some people might notice a group of internationals.

However, if 50 people came, we will certainly get noticed!!

We can practically be part of the signs of the second coming of Jesus as we share our faith this Christmas.

2. **The second practical application from this prophecy is an encouragement to every Christian that God will be faithful to you personally, according to His Bible.**

When you have a personal relationship with God, through Jesus, then you can be 100% certain that God will honour His word to you personally.

This is a great encouragement to us all as we read the Bible.

I know that a number of people have undertaken to read the Bible through in one year since I came to OIC.

This is a great discipline, and a great blessing to the soul.

God speaks to us through his word and encourages us through his promises.

If you want to be really blessed throughout 2018, then I would challenge you to read through the whole Bible.

God will to speak to you and encourage you each day as you read His word.

If you did it this year, do it again. Try a different system.

I am planning on reading through every Psalm, in 2018 and meditating on each one. This is also in preparation for my next preaching series.

If you have read through the Bible in one year, why not do this?

If you can't read, or find reading difficult, there are other ways, like listening to the Bible read in your own language.

It might take 2-3 years to read the Bible, but don't give up. Keep going.

Don't look for prosperity blessing from God, look for inner soul blessing in your heart.

May God bless us all as we soak ourselves in God's word in 2018.