

## What are you waiting for?

*Main point: we need to not lose sight of what God has promised and what he is doing now. Sometimes the wait may be long and discouragement and distraction can set in, but those who trust and obey will be rewarded with great blessings.*

Last week Kirk touched on the idea of prophecy in the scripture and how that gives us intellectual confidence in the scriptures, though it is only truly by faith that we believe the word of God is just that. The examples of fulfilled prophecy also help us to understand that God's march through history is often slow and even imperceptible by human standards. Yet God is accomplishing his work, which should give us confidence regarding the God's activity today.

It is interesting to look at all of the Old Testament prophecies about the first coming of the messiah and how Jesus fulfilled them. In fact I have a short list for anyone interested in looking these over for you own personal study. Did you know, for example, there are at least 37 separate prophecies in the book of Isaiah alone. Kirk spoke of one of the well know "Christmas" prophecies last week. Please turn to the book of Isaiah.

### Isa 9:6-7

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,<sup>b</sup> Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
<sup>7</sup> Of the increase of his government and peace  
there will be no end.  
He will reign on David's throne  
and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.  
The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.

Some important things in just this one short prophecy:

1. **A child, a son is given.** Jesus became flesh. As Php 2:7 says, he emptied himself of His glory, His position in the universe and was made in human likeness. What humility to be obedient and go to the cross. What complete self-sacrificing love. And he did it for the joy set before Him and for the love of His Father. This is the spirit of Christmas.
2. **The government will be upon his shoulders.** I'll come back to this.
3. **He is the wonderful counselor.** Now this speaks of Jesus when he was on earth of course, but as Jesus said before he left, He would send *another counselor*. One

who is so closer than a brother and able to help us in our time of need. He is the one who encourages us and empowers us. The Spirit of Jesus.

4. **He is the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father.** Some scholars render this as the Father of eternity. This implies his pre-eminence over all things as the source of all things and the finisher of all things. This obviously points to the divine nature of the messiah. Paul captures this in Col 1:15-20

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup> 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.

5. Note the appearance of the **Trinity** in this prophecy, a son, the counselor, the father.
6. **He is the Prince of Peace.** We live in a time of turmoil, which seems to be getting more and more intense. Race issues here, terrorist stuff there, Russian aggression, economic uncertainty. Yet Christ grants peace to all those upon whom his favor rests. This includes peace in our relationship with God, peace with each other, it means health in our minds and one day in our bodies, and even over the whole earth.
7. **The increase of his government will know no end.** Kirk talked about the kingdom of God growing and filling the earth. And one day all men will either willingly or by force of the glory of God bow before Jesus and declare He is Lord to the glory of God the father. Note also that wherever men put their government upon the shoulders of Christ their nation benefits.

William Blackstone was a legal scholar back in the 1700's and wrote what was long considered the primary philosophy of the western legal system. Blackstone taught that man is created by God and granted fundamental rights by God.<sup>1</sup> The founders of our nation referred to Blackstone extensively. His philosophies dominated legal thought in the US up until the middle of the last century when many began to rebel against the idea. We need to return to the rule of law based upon God as the giver of rights and the definer of right and wrong. And while the American experiment has been far from perfect – it has enabled mankind to enjoy peace and prosperity not seen before on the earth. We need to return to the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.blackstoneinstitute.org](http://www.blackstoneinstitute.org)

understanding of God's place in our society or we will never be the great nation we once were.

8. Finally we see **he reigns on the throne of David** – he is of the house of David.

#### Luke 2:4-7

So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup> He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup> While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup> and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Of course God also arranged for a census at just the right time so that Joseph would also be compelled to go to Bethlehem, where Jesus had to be born.

#### Mic 5:2

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,  
*Though* you are little among the thousands of Judah,  
*Yet* out of you shall come forth to Me  
 The One to be Ruler in Israel,  
 Whose goings forth *are* from of old,  
 From everlasting."

**It is amazing to see the way God upholds his word and brings all of history to conform to his plans.**

Going back to Isa 9:6-7 we see prophecies already fulfilled and yet still being fulfilled. We know there is a need for the government of God to grow, and for the world to come under the prince of peace. One of the challenges we have as believers is to maintain an expectancy for the things we haven't seen yet while holding on with trust based upon what we have seen.

### ***Don't have a heart of unbelief***

In the context of prophecy we also see what the heart of unbelief looks like. Again in Isaiah, now chapter 7, we see the context of Judah (the Southern kingdom) being attacked by Israel (the Northern kingdom) and Syria. Isaiah is told to go and encourage king Ahaz, who by the way was not a good king.

Ahaz was the king who took some of sacred things out of the temple of the Lord and gave them to the king of Assyria to appease him. He also worshipped the gods of Syria after

they had defeated because he figured their gods must be better. He shut the doors of God's temple and set up sacrifices to foreign gods all over.

So God tells Ahaz through the prophet Isaiah, that the kings of Syria and Israel would be taken down within a few years, and the captives taken by those nations returned to Judah. And he says to him to ask for a sign that He will do what he's told.

Isa 7:10-14

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, <sup>11</sup>"Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights."

<sup>12</sup> But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test."

Such a pious and humble response...NOT. Isn't it amazing that someone so clearly not having the right heart or attitude can sound so holy? So when he says he will not TEST God, what he really means is he refuses to TRUST God. Now in the midst of this God shares another familiar "Christmas" prophecy.

<sup>13</sup> Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? <sup>14</sup> Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Jesus came as Immanuel, God with us. God entered into His creation and became one of us so that he could bear upon himself the penalty of sin we deserved. But not only was he Immanuel when he was physically present on the earth, He sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within us so that we can walk with God's presence always. **What does God's presence mean to us? And do we trust him despite our circumstances? We need to trust what God says about us and live that way. For example:**

Matt 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

**We are now the light of the world, God being seen in this world through us.** How is this possible – Immanuel, God with us.

Rom 15:14 I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.

We say, “well that’s not the case for me”...that’s not humility, that’s unbelief. If you are in Christ you are full of goodness because of **Immanuel – God with us**.

2 Cor 3:5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. <sup>6</sup> He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant- – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

We are competent because we have God in us. We have His word to put in our hearts. It isn’t the strength of our words, but His words in us. **Immanuel – God with us**.

Heb 13:5-6

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

"Never will I leave you;  
never will I forsake you."<sup>a</sup>

<sup>6</sup> So we say with confidence,

"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.  
What can man do to me?"<sup>b</sup>

We need not fret over our circumstances, nor should we be discontent with whatever God has provided. He is Immanuel – never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.

Heb 3:12-14

See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. <sup>13</sup> But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. <sup>14</sup> We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

Don't be like Ahaz who did not believe God. Let us TRUST God to fulfill what he has said he will do. Even when we have to wait. Even if we don't see it in our lifetime.

### ***Timing is everything***

Please turn to Luke 2:21-40

<sup>22</sup> When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"<sup>b</sup>), <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."<sup>c</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. <sup>26</sup> It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. <sup>27</sup> Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, <sup>28</sup> Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

<sup>29</sup> "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,  
you now dismiss<sup>d</sup> your servant in peace.

<sup>30</sup> For my eyes have seen your salvation,

<sup>31</sup> which you have prepared in the sight of all people,

<sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and for glory to your people Israel."

<sup>33</sup> The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. <sup>34</sup> Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, <sup>35</sup> so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Does this passage blow your mind a bit? So how was it that Simeon was so devout in looking for the Christ? In fact there was reason to be looking at this time for the Christ, but as often happens, people are not focused on the important and so **only those looking with their spiritual eyes truly find.**

## A Key Timing Prophecy

I've shared this before in various contexts so many of you have seen this before. But there was very specific prophecy given regarding the first coming of messiah.

Dan 9:24 "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

<sup>25</sup> "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. <sup>26</sup> After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. <sup>27</sup> He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

So let's summarize this prophecy:

- A week represents 7 years
- $(62 + 7) * 7 = 483$  years
- From the decree to restore Jerusalem to the coming of the Messiah
- Jesus ministry started around 25-30 A.D.
- Going backwards 483 years would give us 458 to 453 B.C.

**Is there a decree which lines up with the math?** We know that Ezra returned and began the work of rebuilding the city as well as bringing spiritual revival. Ezra was given his commission in the 7th year of Artaxerxes who began his reign in 464 B.C. This would place his decree to Ezra around 457 B.C. Later, in Ezra's priestly prayer, he alludes to having been given permission, not only to build up the Temple, but also to build the walls of Judah and Jerusalem.

[Ezra 9:9 For we are slaves; yet in our bondage our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem.](#)

Do you find it astounding that such a specific prophecy was given? **So Simeon knew the scriptures, and knew the time was near.** And because he was a righteous and devout man who feared God, God revealed to him that he would live to see the coming messiah.

Think of the Magi also. They likely came from Persia, which is where Daniel was when he received the prophecy about the messiah. Daniel was chief of the Magi under Nebuchadnezzar and so his prophecies may have been taught in schools of the Magi.

Yet so many of the people of Israel missed the coming of the Messiah, when they too should have been expecting him.

What about us? What are our expectations for this time in history? We get distracted and discouraged but we need to be watching and praying. I challenge you to consider what promises of God are waiting to be fulfilled but we're missing out on because we aren't waiting on Christ. We love to hear the encouraging prophecies about God doing something in Alliance. I believe God is certainly moving and I don't want to miss out. Consider though, the time that has gone by while many people here have patiently endured both good years and not so good years, or decades even. Don't think that just because God says something will happen it is not going to require you to go through the fire of testing of your faith. But is waiting on God worth it?

What is God's track record? Faithfulness. Goodness. Sovereignty. His inevitable march through history will certainly bring to pass what he has desired. And what are some of his promises?

- The glory of the Lord shall fill the earth as water covers the seas
- There will be believers from every tribe, tongue and nation
- He will return to the earth for a glorious church