

Advent #3
The King is With Us

There are different ways that churches observe, or don't observe, Advent. There are various versions of the Advent Liturgy questions and readings. No one particular version is right. No matter how you do it, or even don't do it, you are better off than this New Age story of how some seem to be waiting or calling on Yeshua, the Hebrew name for Jesus.

<https://albertmohler.com/2021/11/30/briefing-11-30-21>

A recent story in NY TIMES deals with a woman named Carissa Schumacher.

The story tells us, "In good spirits, Carissa Schumacher channels the dead for an impressive roster of celebrity clients, but she is most comfortable in the forest channeling Yeshua."

In this age of religious pluralism and confusion, I guess that's another way of observing advent – in the forest with a medium.

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. 19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. 20 But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins."

22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us." 24 And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, 25 but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

TWO WORLDVIEW RESPONSES TO THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Response of faith – after encountering an angel - ...Joseph and Mary

Joseph awoke and did as the angel commanded him v. 24

Luke 1:34 Mary said to the angel, "HOW can this be, since I am a virgin?"

Response of secular naturalist:

"This CAN'T be."

Mary doesn't ask, "How can this be?" because she is doubting God per se. She is asking it because she is a virgin. That doesn't simply mean "young woman". The context of Matt 1 makes it clear... "before they came together." (parents, you can translate or explain at home, if need be).

Mary AND JOSEPH may have lived 2000 years ago, but they weren't ignorant. People back then understood the "birds and the bees." They may have understood it and the consequences better than many do today. At least in the Jewish world they understood that certain things were to be reserved for marriage, not betrothal. They understood that there are natural biological consequences of "becoming one."

Mary asked, "How can this be?" because she knew that it would violate the natural order of things – become one with a husband first, THEN conceive a child. She had not yet been "with Joseph."

There was no precedent for a woman to conceive who had not been with a man. And she understood that in the natural order of things, it would take a woman and a man to make a baby.

The conception being described by the angel was unique. But Mary and Joseph believed that God could do it because they understood Luke 1:37 "For nothing will be impossible with God."

By His very nature, God is the one for whom "nothing is impossible", except to lie (Heb 6)

Response of secular naturalist:

“This can’t be.”

Why is the secular naturalist so sure that “this can’t be?”

Because the philosophical naturalist has a prior commitment to a belief that the material world is all there is. There is nothing about the nature of this world or our experience in this world that DEMANDS a pure naturalistic approach. It is a choice, not an empirical necessity.

C.S. Lewis -Reflections on the Psalms: The real reason why I can accept as historical a story in which a miracle occurs is that I have never found any philosophical grounds for the universal negative proposition that miracles do not happen.

In that naturalist worldview, there is no such thing as God or supernatural intervention. Thus, a virgin birth is impossible, or so the naturalist believes.

The secular naturalist can only BELIEVE there is no God. He certainly can’t prove it. For all his protestations about science showing there is no God, there is no such proof. Science doesn’t even have the proper categories to prove the non-existence of a spiritual being. The naturalist approach demands more of science than it can produce.

The naturalist may want to identify his belief with science, but it is still belief. He may want to identify himself with science, but alas, that role has already been claimed.

Based on presumptive reasoning, the naturalist says, “This can’t be” when it comes to the virgin birth. It can’t be because I say there is no God, and I know enough about the nature of reality to be confident in my belief that God does not exist.”

If honest, the naturalist would admit that his or her system is built on faith, not scientific or philosophical necessity or certainty.

All of that to make the point that, if we’re honest, there is a faith component to belief in God and to unbelief.

“But if we admit God, must we admit Miracle? Indeed, you have no security against it. That is the bargain....Admit God and with Him the risk of a few miracles.” Lewis, Miracles

Joseph and Mary held to a worldview which acknowledged the Creator God, and they responded in faith and obeyed God. They gave a free responsible “yes” and accepted becoming the parental stewards of the new creation conceived by the Holy Spirit.

Luke 1:31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

Matt 1:20 “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23“Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,”

What about the prophetic context?

(Kostenberger – First Days of Jesus; David Platt – Commentary on Matthew)

Matthew cites Isaiah 7 and says that the birth of Jesus fulfills that prophecy. Keep in mind that Matthew has a good grasp of OT prophecy. He often refers to events in the life of Christ as fulfilling what was written. It shouldn’t surprise us to see the OT connected to the NT since there are over 400 OT citations in the NT. Jesus Himself indicated that all of the OT is about Him. (Jn 5:39; Luke 24:27)

The reference to Isaiah 7, around 735 BC, speaks of a context of military conflict involving Syria, the Northern kingdom of Israel, and Assyria – the big empire of the day. Syria and Israel were trying to get Ahaz, the king of Judah to join their coalition against Assyria. (SEE 2 Kings 16 for more on this). The passage of Isaiah 7 fits into the timeframe of the narrative of 2 Kings 16.

<https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=studiaantiqua>

Ahaz of Judah turned to Assyria for help rather than turning to God. Isaiah goes to Ahaz and says, “keep calm, don’t be afraid, it won’t come to pass”. He tells the king to ask for a sign – “as deep as Sheol or high as heaven.”

“No”, says Ahaz, so Isaiah promises that the Lord will give a sign ...7:11ff. **“Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,”**

The sign is of a young woman with child – a boy, to be named Immanuel, “God with us.” By the time he knows how to refuse evil and do good, this threat will be over. (that is actually a young age)

That was an immediate initial fulfillment, so it seemed that the Immanuel prophecy was fulfilled, but there was more to it. It was not unusual for the prophets to predict even more than they knew.

The text of Isaiah 7 is to be seen in the context of Isaiah 9:1-11. The two texts are linked by the references to the birth of a son, but in Isa 9 the description is of one who is more than human and will accomplish a deliverance that extends beyond the historical context. (Kostenberger)

The audience didn’t know that the ultimate fulfillment would come 700 years later.

Matthew was familiar with the OT messianic prophecies as he applies both Isa 7 and 9 to Christ.

In Isaiah 9 there is reference to a Light that will shine on the Gentiles, and again Matthew applies it to Jesus in Matthew 4:15-16 – citing Is 9:1-2

9:2 The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light;

Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them.

What we do know is that Isaiah 7:14 is a prophecy with certain fulfillment in Christ. The God we worship made a promise through the prophet Isaiah that was fulfilled seven hundred years later in the virgin birth of Christ. While “scholars” may debate some of the issues, the Holy Spirit guided Matthew to make the direct connection between Isaiah 7:14 and 9:1-2 to Jesus.

*****SO WHAT? What does the prophecy about Jesus and the Virgin Birth mean for us?**

God fulfilled the prophecy, so we can have confidence that He will fulfill the prophecies and promises for the future of His people – stayed tuned as we continue in Revelation in January.

What is told to Joseph and Mary?

Matt 1 He will save His people from their sins.” They will call His name Immanuel (Isa 7)

Luke 1:32ff- to Mary

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.

Jesus is the Savior

Jesus is God with Us

Jesus Reigns

Christmas means ALL THREE OF THOSE.

If you pick and choose then you’re not dealing with the whole Christ.

Do you believe it? Do you know Jesus in those ways?

Is He YOUR SAVIOR?

Not just a good example to follow. Not just a good teacher to learn from. BUT SAVIOR.
The theme of the need for a Savior runs all through scripture, and in Jesus, the Savior has come.

Don't let that be background noise to you. If you've been in church for a while, "Jesus as savior" can sound like the teacher in the Charlie Brown Christmas, "wa, wa, wa"

How does the Bible deal with the news of a Savior? The shepherds got a heavenly light and sound show with angels.

Luke 2:8 In the same region there were *some* shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. **9** And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. **10** But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; **11** for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

There is GLORY AND GREAT JOY for a Savior has been born.

There is great JOY because we have a Savior who is Immanuel – "God WITH US"

That is no small matter. The height of OT blessing is the presence of God.

"The Lord make His face to shine upon you" is ground zero of blessedness.

Jesus promises to be with us even to the end of the age. He sends us the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit to remind us of His presence.

Friends, let's not ignore or underestimate the value of "God with us." Yes, He is high and lifted up. He is on the throne of the universe. He is to be approached with reverence. BUT He is WITH us and FOR us. When all else fails, when all others fall away, HE REMAINS FAITHFUL AND IS WITH US.

Psalm 73:28 But as for me, the nearness of God is my good;

I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,

That I may tell of all Your works.

Finally, Joseph and Mary learn that Jesus is born to REIGN.

He is king.

Remember the medium who says that she "channels Yeshua"?

The actress Jennifer Aniston is quoted in the article as reflecting the fact that this is a rather outrageous claim. She said, "The Yeshua-channeling thing is way out there, and for some people, it's going to be insane this idea of someone channeling Jesus, but it's more about this message that she's tapped into. Everything she's communicated to me just resonates."

Jesus didn't come to "resonate" with us. He came to REIGN. He reigns whether we resonate with him or not.

He has COME AS KING.

HOW IS THIS GOOD NEWS? Because we need a king who can guide and protect us.

Q. 26. How does Christ execute the office of a king? (this answer could be a sermon series, so listen up)

Answer:

Christ executes the office of a king, in calling out of the world a people to Himself, and giving them officers, laws, and censures, by which He visibly governs them; in bestowing saving grace upon His elect, rewarding their obedience, and correcting them for their sins, preserving and supporting them under all their temptations and sufferings, restraining and overcoming all their enemies, and powerfully ordering all

things for His own glory, and their good; and also in taking vengeance on the rest, who know not God, and obey not the gospel.

Friends, we may not realize it, but we want Him as King; we need Him as King. Our only real lasting Hope is to have a King who rules in righteousness.
Someone must straighten out this messed up world.

He first came as King, as a baby to come here to die like a man, for us.

Edward Shillito (WWI)

The other gods were strong, but Thou wast weak;
They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne;
But to our wounds only God's wounds can speak,
And not a god has wounds, but Thou alone.

Here's more good news...

If you know this King, then He invites you to His table where His healing wounds are displayed through the bread and the blood.

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