

“God’s Sign!”—Isaiah 7:10-14

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “God’s Sign!”, is Isaiah 7:10-14 → *Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

*Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord* (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

“If only God would give me a sign!” Many people may cry out with these words when floundering in life, desiring the LORD to give them some direction in the midst of difficult situations and decisions. In such a context it could actually be a prayer of submissive faith, seeking the LORD’s guidance, help and deliverance.

However, many times the desire for a sign from God accompanies unbelief and doubt. A sign is demanded as proof to verify a claim as

being valid. Jesus encountered this during His earthly ministry (cf. Matthew 12:38; 16:1; John 2:18; 6:30). Since such demands flowed from the unbelief of those requesting the signs, Jesus responded by telling them that *an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah* (cf. Matthew 12:39). In other words, the signs verifying the Person & Work of Jesus are already given you. They're written in the Old Testament Scriptures. Faith which trusts in the atoning work of Jesus for the forgiveness of yours sins is a gift of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Corinthians 2:6-14; Ephesians 2:8-9). Faith is not proving something to appease human logic.

By the same token, signs actually played an important role in God's working and dealing with His people as evidence from the LORD of His faithfulness in keeping His Word. There is nothing wrong with signs from Yahweh **when initiated by Him**. Gideon's seeking a sign with *a fleece of wool on the threshing floor* was done in response to Yahweh's coming to him and telling him that he would deliver Israel from the Midianites at a time when they wondered about the LORD's presence actually being among them (cf. Judges 6:13-14,36-40). God gave Moses a sign to reassure the people of Yahweh's presence in their deliverance (cf. Exodus 3:12). The shepherds were given a sign to experience Yahweh's presence when the angel told them, *And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger* (cf. Luke 2:12).

In verses 10-11 of our text Ahaz, king of Judah, was demanded by the LORD to *ask* Him for a *sign* to reassure Ahaz of Yahweh's presence and protection amongst His people. This encounter and promise was initiated by God in light of Ahaz's fear of the king of Israel and the king of Syria uniting to attack Jerusalem. The LORD sent the prophet Isaiah to bring Ahaz a message of Yahweh's presence and protection, calling him to be *firm in faith* (cf. Isaiah 7:1-9). In the midst of Ahaz's unbelief the LORD tells him to ask for a sign as *deep as Sheol* (i.e. the place of the dead) or *high as heaven*.

King Ahaz was a man who *did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God* and even led God's people into the worship of false gods. *He sacrificed and made offerings* to them, even burning *his son as an offering, according to the despicable practices of the pagan nations* around them (cf. 2 Kings 16:1-4). In light of such lack of faith in and obedience to Yahweh, Ahaz's reaction to God's demand in verse 12 of our text makes sense: He refused to obey saying, *I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test*.

*Put the LORD to the test?* Seems Ahaz is rather confused. It is Yahweh Who is testing Ahaz's faith, or shall we say, lack of faith. True, Deuteronomy 6:16 does say, *you shall not put the LORD your God to the test*. However, Deuteronomy 6:17 goes on to say, *you shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God*. Here Ahaz did not obey

Yahweh's command to *ask* Him for a *sign* because He lacked faith in the LORD. His hypocrisy was quite evident to Isaiah.

Yahweh's response to Ahaz's lack of faith in verse 13 of our text shows what unbelief does. First, it wearies men. Instead of bringing people into the LORD's presence and grace, Ahaz led them away from Him into pagan idolatry. It wearied God's people by leaving them no comfort in the forgiveness of sins as well as eventually causing them to lose their land at the hand of *the king of Assyria* (cf. Isaiah 7:17). It wearied God because He grieves over unrepentance and disobedience, leaving Him no choice but to discipline His children, causing them to suffer in order to restore relationship with them again (cf. Deuteronomy 32:39; 1 Samuel 2:6; Isaiah 28:21; Hosea 6:1).

Thus, God promised to give Him a *sign* anyway. It would be a magnificent display of His faithfulness and concern for sinners in His desire to restore a perfect relationship with them again. Isaiah said in verse 14 of our text: *Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.* God promised that His Son would be born of *the virgin*, an act completely contrary to the natural order of things. It truly would be the miraculous sign of His presence to deliver people from their slavery to sin.

Recall Mary when she was told about conceiving in her womb and

bearing a *Son* whom she would *name Jesus*. The angel said, *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.* Wow! What does one do with that “birth announcement?” Even in the midst of wondering how such a thing could happen since she was a virgin, she submitted to God’s will by faith. *Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.”* (cf. Luke 1:26-38)

Recall Joseph’s response when the angel appeared to him in a dream, instructing him *to take Mary home as his wife* and explaining the miraculous conception. Matthew 1:22-23 says *all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel” (which means, God with us)*. Even in the midst of such unfathomable circumstances Joseph submitted to God’s will by faith and took Mary home as his wife (cf. Matthew 1:18-25). God produced His sign by coming among us in human form to deliver us from the power of the devil, obtain the forgiveness of our sins and restore perfect relationship with Him! Indeed, God came to be *with us* in His Son, Jesus, the Christ. As Colossians 2:9 says: *In Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.*

Do you find these words from Isaiah to bring you comfort or fear? There are many today living in unbelief just like Ahaz, who have been

baptized into Christ Jesus and raised in the Christian faith who are currently walking in unbelief. In a kind of romanticized picture of a baby in a manger, nestled upon the straw with proud parents huddled together rejoicing in the birth of their son, you can celebrate Christmas without actually seeing the impact of this sign called *Immanuel*. While Simeon was holding baby Jesus and rejoicing in His presence he saw much more because of His faith based upon God's written Word. He *said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed.*

When you place your faith in the atoning Work of Jesus based upon the sign already given you in God's written Word, these words of Isaiah become words of comfort for sinners such as you and me. It leads you to repent of your sins and rejoice in the complete forgiveness purchased for you by *Immanuel*. They are words which govern your understanding of what we celebrate during the "holidays." We celebrate God's faithfulness in keeping His promise of taking on human flesh in the Babe of Bethlehem so that He would take all your sins on Himself while on the cross of Calvary.

Still looking for a sign? Signs to which Jesus pointed people during His earthly public ministry were embedded in the history of God's dealings with His people in the Old Testament. He told the crowds in Luke 11:30 → *As Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will*

*the Son of Man be to this generation.* He told Nicodemus in John 3:14-15 → *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life.*

You have the privilege of living on the fulfillment side of those signs so that you can receive the benefits of forgiveness of sins, new life and salvation in Christ. Today we still point to His death and resurrection **on the basis of the promises of God's written Word.** Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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