

Madison Heights Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
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MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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Open doors-----Open hearts

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That's What I Call Love

During Advent and Christmas I like to reflect on the birth narratives and Old Testament prophecy. One of my favorites is **Isaiah 7:14** Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel (NRSV). The NIV has the young woman listed as a virgin and the NRSV has a footnote that the Greek wording is virgin. We cannot go into the mind of Isaiah and learn what he was thinking. However, we do know that Matthew interpreted it as prophecy of the Messiah. The birth narrative of Matthew attributes the birth of Jesus to both divine intervention and fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. He attributes Mary's pregnancy to be from the Holy Spirit, angels engaging in the world to direct human activity, and quotes Old Testament prophecy to prove the text in fulfillment of the prophecy.

A prophecy is not a matter of predicting the future. A prophecy is the word of God given to humanity through a spokesperson acting on God's behalf. Since the word is from God then it is accurate as history unfolds in the future. There are some things that the world knew (or should have known) about the promised Messiah before the birth of Christ. These are known as signs. I am reminded of a time when my mother was driving and as we approached a blind curve I told her to slow down. She wanted to know why so I told her that there's a train up ahead. As we rounded the turn we suddenly came upon backed up traffic and she had to apply the brakes harder than usual to stop the car. After we stopped, she asked me how I knew this. I said "I saw the sign." They didn't have signs in biblical times like we have today. One of the most significant signs of all is the sign of a virgin giving birth. I have known some people to debate the probability of this but what is impossible for humanity is possible for God. What is not debatable is that the book of Isaiah was written and published before Jesus was born, Matthew interpreted the prophecy of Isaiah to be Messianic, and scholars verified the accuracy of Matthew and the other gospels to canonize them into the Bible.

God promised something great from the line of King David, but much more significant than just another king, this king was promised to be a royal son given through natural child birth. He will be known by his life and ministry, the things he will do and the things he will say. His own name will signify God's presence with us. God not only promised to send the great deliverer from the line of David but also from the city of David. So, it is in Bethlehem that God's Anointed One comes into the world. People from other parts of the world, not just Israel, anticipate the Messiah and come to pay him homage. This indicates the Messiah came for all people.

There are many Old Testament scripture references that can be interpreted as referring to Jesus and there are many eyewitnesses that testify to his divine status. But while the people were waiting and anticipating the arrival of God's promised redeemer it was difficult for them to imagine that a royal king would come not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for them. Jesus fulfilled the words of Isaiah and others and Christ is risen indeed. When you love someone, you will give them the best gift you can give to them. The more you love the more you give. What we get at Christmas is God's love. We get the very best gift that God has to give. We receive the most prized gift of all even when we don't deserve it, appreciate it, or give it the referent respect that it deserves. Some even reject this gift but still God gives God's very best. That's what I call love.

In Christian love,
George Harris