

“A BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT BEFORE THE BIRTH!”

Isaiah 7:14

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**.

Dear Redeemed in our Advent Lord,

Think of all the different kinds of announcements you read:

- A grand opening in the mall or a “going out of business” sale.
- A mid-year graduation party in December or a retirement party next June
- A wedding announcement/invitation for February or a jewelry show at a friend’s house in January.
- A estate sale auction or a moving garage sale.
- Probably your first/favorite to check in the paper: THE DEATH NOTICES.
- Even today’s bulletin announces our Christmas services this holiday week with the implied invitation to attend them with your families/friends.

One such announcement that always comes after the fact is a birth announcement. It used to be that no one including the parents knew the gender of their coming baby and so everyone waited with breathless anticipation for the news. But now, **THANKS TO ULTRASOUND**, that’s known long before birth. But announcements can’t tell you what the baby looks like, the hair color or how much, eye color, length, or weight until it’s born. And that’s when you get the full announcement----**AFTER THE BIRTH** like it’s supposed to be.

But not today. The 4th & final Sunday in Advent changes all that. Today, the prophet Isaiah sends us:

“A BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT BEFORE THE BIRTH!”

1. Look for the signs
2. Look at the name

1

Watching for signs is a normal, everyday experience. Driving to a strange address requires studying a map, getting directions, or (in today’s techy world) listening to that lovely GPS (global positioning system) voice telling you where/when to turn. We watch for signs of a snowstorm during winter, severe weather during the summer, or changing colors in the fall. An old secular Christmas song has all kinds of signs that tell us: *“It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas....everywhere you go.”*

Was it beginning to look a lot like Christmas when Isaiah recorded this very popular verse? Not in the least. As much as this verse was a prophecy of good news for God’s people, it was also a message of doom for those who were not God’s people.

And one of those was named **AHAZ**. He was the wicked king over Judah, the kingdom from whom the Messiah was to come. Ahaz was being attacked by the King of Aram and Israel. As leader of Judah, his best strategy was to trust in the Lord and his message. Instead, Ahaz got cold feet (not from snow), but from a lack of trust in God. We’re told prior to our text: ...**the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind.** {Is 7:2} So God sent Isaiah to deliver a message to Ahaz not to fear, not to lose heart because God was with them. He even told Ahaz to ask for a sign from God just to prove his point. But either in fear or in stupidity or both, Ahaz refused God and in so doing began the avalanche of destruction upon the southern kingdom of Judah.

In effect, Ahaz did not look for the signs he needed to see to march forward. Instead he looked within himself and in essence, found nothing to strengthen his fear. So God gave him another sign to look for: **THE VIRGIN WILL BE WITH CHILD AND WILL GIVE BIRTH TO A SON...** The sign to look for will be a delivered far greater and more powerful than Ahaz. The answer was a birth announcement some 700 years before the birth!

For Ahaz, this announcement was judgment, for it warned him and all those who rejected God that the once great kingdom of Judah would be wiped out, never again to be the majestic kingdom it once was. And a new king would eventually be born to bring judgment and justice on the unbeliever.

On this 4th Sunday in Advent, we **look for the signs** in this birth announcement before the birth and see a completely different picture. The signs point to a virgin miraculously conceiving a child out of wedlock not by sin with a human father but by God’s plan with the Holy Spirit. The signs say this child is a boy, not because it shows up that way on an ultrasound slide, but because that boy is the very Son of Man. The signs all point to the 4,000 year long answer to God’s prophetic puzzle to Adam and Eve that the seed of the woman would produce a Messiah come to crush the serpent’s head.

Is there anything to doubt here whom this announcement is all about? Are we reading all the signs correctly that someone very special is about to be born? During this Advent season, we have tried to provide oodles of signs announcing a birth before the birth. The Advent service by our school students told us. The Advent series from Jude told us. The Sunday School JAM program in the late service will tell us.

If you haven't been looking for the signs, then you've missed out on something very special here. You missed the opportunities to prepare your hearts, minds, and lives for the greatest celebration of the greatest birth known to mankind. But there still is time---not much---but time [to look for the signs of God's birth announcement before the birth!](#)

2

The most important part of any birth announcement after the birth is not just what the parents had, but what do they name him/her. So immediately you [look at the name](#) and Isaiah has us doing that too.

Names have meaning. Do you know the meaning to your name? For instance, **DAVID**=dearly loved, **SAMUEL**=God heard, **EMMA**=all-embracing, or **SOPHIA**=wisdom.

Look at the name and you'll find meaning. That couldn't be more true than looking at the name of the Son which the virgin would give birth to. **THE VIRGIN WILL BE WITH CHILD AND WILL GIVE BIRTH TO A SON, AND WILL CALL HIM IMMANUEL.** Look up this name online and you'll find the same thing Matthew told us chapter 1:23: **GOD WITH US.** That's not what google/yahoo told him – [that's what the Angel of the Lord told him.](#)

So look at the name on the Isaiah announcement and...

...you learn **this child to be born** is true God (holy, perfect, sinless, come to keep the Father's will).

You learn **this child to be born** is the Son of God come from heaven to earth.

You learn **this child to be born** is our Servant and Redeemer **who comes not to be served, but to serve and give up his life as a ransom for many.** (Mk 10:45)

You learn **this child to be born** gives his body and sheds his blood on the cross to assure you that your sins are forgiven so you can go in peace.

You learn that **this child to be born** rises from the dead and ascends into heaven so one day we will rise and ascend to the same place.

You learn **this child to be born** will return one more time to take us and all believers to heaven to the mansions he has waiting for us.

This is **IMMANUEL (GOD WITH US)**, Jesus Christ (**GOD & LORD**). All signs point to a spectacular celebration of the birth which this announcement foretold to God's faithful people in the O.T. and today. He is Jesus, God's Son, a virgin's son, a miracle son, a gift from God!

Advent is just about over. But [look at the signs](#) and [look at the name](#) of this **BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT** which comes **BEFORE THE BIRTH** and you quickly discover that ["It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas"!!](#) **AMEN**