

Our theme for today: Prophecy.

At Christmas time, hopefully, you'll receive some Christmas cards. Perhaps you'll see verses from the bible and most of them are prophecies. Prophecies such as: *"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given"* or *"The Virgin shall be with child and she shall bear forth a son and call Him Emmanuel, God with us"*. The prophecies of old were read by Joseph. They can be read by us too, even today!

Scripture

²⁰ *But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." ²⁴ When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, ²⁵ but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.*

Matthew 1:20-25

Thought provokers

- This righteous man, Joseph, found himself in the middle of prophecies told of long ago but were now coming to fruit. Indeed, *"all this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet."* That prophecy was from Isaiah 7:14, words that were written some 680-700 years earlier.

"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." Isaiah 7:14
- For 700 years, God continued in His Sovereign work after commissioning Isaiah to record those words. Now, in God's timing, at this moment in time, the time came for the fulfillment of a promise – and it was spoken to Joseph in a dream.
- It's astounding to see what happens. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and he took Mary home as his wife. And, as we can see, he had no union with her until she gave birth to her son and he gave him the name Jesus.
 - There is no mention of any internal struggle, is there, in verses 20-25? To many this might seem far-fetched; it might seem impossible that this man who had come to a resolution now changes direction – all because of a dream. He changes his plans. But is it really far-fetched? Why do you think this is true? Try to answer that question in depth, because as you make plans, and you set your

course, it may well be that God may have a different plan and knowing why it's not far-fetched might very well help you take righteous steps of faith as well.

Reflections

If we recognize the fact that we live in a world that God is absolute and eternally sovereign, then is it really so hard to embrace the fact that God could bring life into world through a virgin woman by the power of the Holy Spirit; that the prophecies of old would last the test of time for over 7 centuries and reach an artisan named Joseph in the hills of Nazareth in one of the smallest countries in the world; that God would bring this young woman and this young man together for this very time; that God would give commandments and guidance to uphold twelve tribes so through just one of them one young man would oversee and be father to One who would save people from their sins? Is it so hard to embrace such truth? In just one moment you can say, "yes". And this is precisely what Joseph did as well when God's Word came to him – he embraced it. He trusted God – he had faith.

Is God giving you a new plan today? Has He given you a plan – and you've been pondering and struggling with it for some time? Is today the day you say, "*yes, Lord, I will follow your plan.*"

Why should you say "yes"? We should say "yes!" because God's plans are sovereign, they are true, they are wise, and they are loving. We can hope in His ways. We might vaguely hope in our plans, but in truth we don't know what will happen. But with God, He knows – He has a plan and He is with us!

Prayer and Song

Take time to pray and sing praises to Him. Here is a German carol translated into English.

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming

*Lo, how a rose e'er blooming
From tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming
As men of old have sung.
It came a floweret bright,
Amid the cold of winter,
When half spent was the night.*

*Isaiah 'twas foretold it,
The rose I have in mind;
With Mary we behold it,
The virgin mother kind.*

*To show God's love aright,
She bore to men a Savior,
When half spent was the night.*

*This Flow'r, whose fragrance tender
With sweetness fills the air,
Dispels with glorious splendor
The darkness everywhere.
True man, yet very God,
From sin and death He saves us
And lightens every load.*