

Our theme for today: A sign

You know who King Ahaz was? A King of Judah... and a terrible king at that! In the book of Isaiah chapter 7 we see that he is in deep trouble. He is under threat. Still, God sends a prophet to him, named Isaiah. Ahaz is told (just like Mary was) to *“have no fear”*. Ahaz, therefore, is given the opportunity to trust. Then, shortly after, Isaiah tells Ahaz to ask for a sign. It was a simple task, but Ahaz resisted even that. He rebuffs God’s offers to have no fear and he arrogantly says he won’t ask for a sign – all despite God wanting him to do so. With that, God’s invitations disappear and Ahaz gets a sign whether he wants it or not! The sign is the most unusual sign. *“A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son whose name shall be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14)”*.

Scripture

³⁴ *Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”* ³⁵ *The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.*

Luke 1:34-35

Thought provokers

- Most commentators contend that Mary understood the ramifications of her being a virgin in her conversation with the angel. So, it is believed, when Gabriel said: *“You will conceive in your womb and bear a son”*, Mary knew he quoted from Isaiah 7:14: a virgin will be with child and bear a son.
 - The premise of the commentators’ arguments is that she knew her Bible. She knew the verses from Isaiah 7:14 and so when the angel spoke, she got the importance of it. What does that say about Mary?

Reflections

If you read Isaiah 7:13-14, most scholars recognize that the verses are addressing the house of David in general (not Ahaz – that would come later in verse 15-17) and that the interpretation is that these verses refer to the virgin birth of Christ in the future. As you read those verses there is very much the sense – as God is speaking to Ahaz – that the sign is actually a warning. The house of David is getting a sign because they are wearying God! But, despite the fact that Ahaz gets this sign, he still rejects it. He doesn’t believe! When the Lord gives Ahaz a sign to be trusted in, to whom would the effects of disbelief impact? A review of 14 and 17 make it clear. Failure to believe will not only affect Ahaz, but his people, and the house of Judah. Subjects, sons and successors would feel the weight of God’s judgment for centuries.

Now fast forward to the time of Mary. Her nation had been split into two kingdoms (a Northern and a Southern), later Ephraim would separate from Judah, then, Assyria would lay siege and later still the people would come under the foot of Babylon and eventually Rome. Mary lived in dark times, but the sign was still evident. Even after all the years of Ahaz's disbelief, the sign was still evident. *A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son whose name shall be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14)*".

And so, at that moment of revelation, Mary asks "*How can this be, since I am a virgin?*"

It is clear that, unlike Ahaz, Mary proves to be a woman of belief not disbelief. She listens to the messenger and hears the task put before her. She does not resist; she does not rebuff God. Through her, subjects, sons and successors would feel and experience the glory of God's grace! It's why the angel says "*the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.*"

We were promised that a Son would come. Ahaz disbelieved; Mary trusted.
How about you?

Prayer and Song

Take time to pray and sing praises to Him. Here is one we've provided by Mark Lowry.

Mary, Did You Know?

*Mary, did you know
That your baby boy will one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know
That your baby boy will save our sons and
daughters?
Did you know
That your baby boy has come to make you new?
This child that you've delivered
Will soon deliver you*

*Mary, did you know
That your baby boy will give sight to a blind
man?
Mary, did you know*

*That your baby boy will calm a storm with His
hand?
Did you know
That your baby boy has walked where angels
trod?
And when you kiss your little baby
You've kissed the face of God*

*Mary, did you know?
The blind will see
The deaf will hear
And the dead will live again
The lame will leap
The dumb will speak
The praises of the Lamb*