

Day Four

The passage in Isaiah we have been looking at is not the only Old Testament prophetic passage where we meet this “son” who is coming to rule and reign on earth. Read Daniel 7:9-14.

Before whom does this one “like a son of man” appear? Who would you say is pictured seated on the throne? (Keep in mind that this is not an actual “picture” but a vision that presents to us in idea in pictorial form.)

How is the “son” who appears before the Ancient of Days described? What will this son do?

What kind of person would it be who could rule all the peoples of the earth? Who is it that all the peoples of the earth should serve?

We get another image that informs us in the book of Revelation. Read Revelation 5:1-14. What does this passage picture that “fits” with what we have been looking at in Isaiah and Daniel?

How do these various prophetic snapshots (from Isaiah, Daniel, and Revelation) fill in your understanding of how you should think about the Messiah, Jesus, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas?

It is an amazing thought that this divine being, God the Son, so condescended that He entered into our world by being born clothed in human flesh and placed in a feeding trough in a manger. We sing a carol that captures the magnitude of this entrance. A line from “Hark, the Herald Angel Sing” reads: “Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; Hail the incarnate deity! Pleased as man with man to dwell, Jesus, our Immanuel!” Worship *Him* today.

Day Five

Although it is hard for us to grasp how it is that God Himself can enter into our world, born as any other child. But this is the miracle of Christmas. And, the New Testament rightly proclaims that this Savior, this Messiah, is no less than God-come-to-us-in-flesh. Look over the following New Testament passages and make a few observations about what is said about Jesus:

Ephesians 1:3-14:

Colossians 1:15-20:

Colossians 2:8-19:

Hebrews 1:1-6:

Look back over your observations. Could what you observed about Jesus be said about *any created being*? Would it be appropriate to speak of someone other than God Himself in such terms? Why or why not?

As we contemplate and reflect on the birth of Jesus, what risk do we face if we end up thinking *only in terms of the birth of a special child*?

Listen. Listen to the carols and the greetings. Read the cards that you send and you receive. And then notice: Christmas is about God showing up! The heart of the season is that God Almighty Himself has invaded our world. And let that awareness fill your thoughts and your heart and your celebration.



Day One

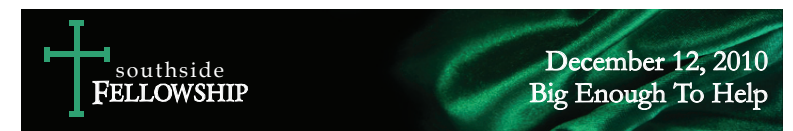
It invariably happens. You are facing those “holiday deadlines” and you begin to wonder: “Who can help me with all of this?!” Maybe it’s the food prep; where might you go for that special something. Perhaps it’s the decorating; you wonder who is tall enough to hang the lights or creative enough to make the ordinary look like a “winter wonderland.” But we often feel the need for some real help. And help is great, as long as the one who helps is really able to help!

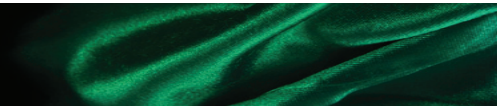
Our Christmas focus is on a prophecy in the ninth chapter of Isaiah where God, in a real sense, is promising a helper for Israel (and for the world!). The Messiah, God’s deliverer and rescuer, is pictured in this passage. Read Isaiah 9:1-7.

From just the description here, what is the need that exists in Israel and the world? What kind of help is really needed?

In promising this help, the Lord, speaking through Isaiah, tells of a “child born” and a “son given.” And this special one is given some particular names to help identify just what kind of helper he will be. We first looked at “wonderful counselor” (last week). What did you conclude that particular name or title was conveying about this promised one?

The second name given to this special one is “Mighty God.” What comes to mind when you hear that title?





What might it mean to “those who walked in darkness” (9:2) that one referred to a “mighty God” was going to show up?

A promise was made earlier in this same book. Read Isaiah 7:10-14. What is the name given to the promised child? What does that name mean?

When we think of Christmas, we rightly think of the “baby lying in the manger.” But part of what the prophet is telling us is that small child is, in some profound and overwhelming reality, God Himself come to earth. How do you sometimes lose sense of the magnitude of that idea?

What can help you, this Christmas season, reaffirm your understanding that what we are celebrating is nothing less than God Himself invading our planet in a personal way?

Day Two

How are we to understand the Messiah being called the “Mighty God”? As we noted last week, names carried a significance in Bible times in a way that people, in our day and age, seem to overlook. The *name* or what someone is *called* tells something about the person. So, when the promised Messiah is called the “Mighty God,” what is being said?

First, note Isaiah 10:20-21 and Jeremiah 32:17-18. Who is being talked about in *those* passages? How is He referred to?

The name or title “Mighty God” is used of Yahweh (the LORD) in the Isaiah 10 and Jeremiah 32 passage; it is an appropriate title for the one true and living God. This title is a compound name; that is, it is made up of two words. The first is the Hebrew word most commonly translated “God” (*Elohim*); the second is an adjective that means strong or powerful or mighty (*Gibbor*). So, God is “God who is the powerful one.” That this title is used so clearly of God Himself is tremendously significant when we hear it applied to the

Messiah—the one we know to be Jesus. What is being said in using this title to refer to Jesus, the “son given”?

We must also note, however, that the giving of this “son” who is to rightly be identified with/as the “Mighty God” is something that “the LORD of Hosts” (Isaiah 9:7) will Himself accomplish. Thus, in these few verses we are being told that the God of Israel will give to Israel (and the world) a “son” who will also be identified in some real and profound way as God. How do you “make sense” of this?

In the days to come, we will attempt to unpack a bit more of what is implied in this title given to the Son, but minimally, we must affirm that this Messiah whose birth we celebrate is the *one who is able to help with divine power and might*. How could that realization revitalize the way you approach your day today? What difference does it make to how you are thinking about what lies ahead of you today to know that the Messiah who has come into the world to be your wonderful counselor comes not just with *some* power, but with *divine might*?

Talk to Jesus about what the day holds for you. Think out loud with Him about the challenges you are anticipating, the struggles that you fear you will have to face, the obstacles to be overcome, the work to be undertaken. Explore with Him how He might want to show Himself to be the “Mighty God” to you as the day unfolds.

Day Three

Since the earliest days of the Church, the believing community has affirmed that the God we meet in the Bible is “tri-une.” What this means is that God reveals Himself, in the pages of Scripture and in the unfolding of His character and plan in our world, as more than uni-personal. That is, in the One True God, there eternally exist three persons: Father, Son and Spirit.

This idea is, obviously, a hard one to grasp. Were it not revealed to us in Scripture, we would not have any reason to assert such a thing. But once we realize it is what God tells us about Himself, then it

becomes easier to see indications of this truth in various passages of Scripture. Even, for example, in the passage we have been looking at this Christmas season. Reread Isaiah 9:1-7.

Who is the one who will accomplish this great thing being spoken of in this passage?

Who is the one who “gives” the son to the nation?

By what name is this given son known?

Where do you see God pictured in this passage?

Where do you see hints or suggestions that this God is more than uni-personal? (That is, where does it make sense to understand that God is, in some sense, more than just one person.)

Turn and read John 1:1-18.

Who is the Word, as John presents Him here?

What, in the text, tells you that the one John refers to as the Word is, indeed, truly God?

Is there another, here in John 1, who is also rightly seen to be God? If so, who? Where do you see it?

It would seem to be the case that the Word is God; but the Word is not in Himself all that God is. It is clear that the Father is the one who sends the Word into the world; but the Father is also God. And it is God, the Son, the sent one, who makes God, the Father, the sender, known to all mankind. Seeing this, how can this passage inform your understanding of what we were reading in Isaiah 9?