

Topic	Responding When He Comes
Reference	Matthew 1:18-25
Date	22 December 2019
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The topic assigned to us this morning is responding when he comes. It is about how we should respond to Jesus Christ. To respond appropriately to Christ, we need to understand who he is and why he came. So, this morning we will take a look at who Christ is and why He came based on Matthew Chapter 1:18-25 there was read to us just now.

We will look at this text and see who Christ is and why he came. Not only that, we will also want to remove the things that will hinder us from taking this text seriously as the Word of God. Unless we take this text seriously as the word of God, we will not take seriously what it teaches about Christ, who He is and why He came.

But note that the topic is phrased in the future tense, responding when he comes. I suppose Christmas is due three days away. In a sense, we are still anticipating Christmas, but the topic requires us to put ourselves in the place of the people before Christ was born, the first Christmas. Long before Christ was born, there was an expectation that he would come. That's why when he comes, not if he comes, because there were prophecies in the Old Testament predicting, anticipating the coming of the Messiah or Christ.

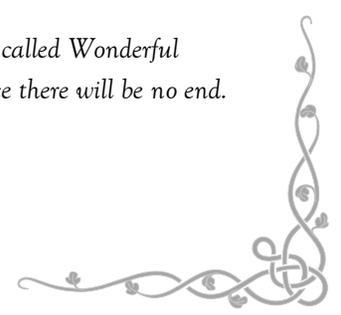
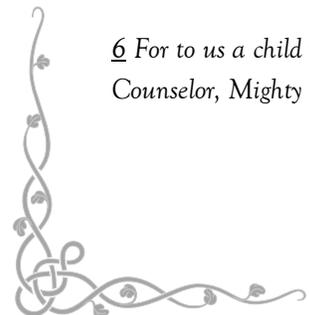
So, this morning we will look at those prophecies too, because when he comes, we want to place ourselves in the position of the people who will anticipate his coming based on the prophecies. And these prophecies will help us to better understand who Jesus is and why he came. In fact, what we read in Matthew is record of the fulfillment of three prophecies. In the book of Isaiah, one of them is quoted, two of them are alluded, not quoted. Of course, the one quoted is very clear, Isaiah 7:14 about the virgin birth, Emmanuel, but there are two prophecies in Isaiah that are alluded, not quoted. Note, there is the emphases that Joseph is the son of David. Why emphasize that he is a son of David?

Now in the record of birth of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke, the focus was on Mary, here the focus was on Joseph, and the angel said to Mary more than what he said to Joseph concerning the son of David. This is what angel Gabriel said to Mary, Luke 1:31

31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

What is this text all about? The son of David. That God will give to Jesus the throne of his father David. This is a fulfillment of Isaiah chapter nine verse six and seven which we are familiar during Christmas time especially. Isaiah 9:6 says

6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.



He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

Note the wording of Luke 1 and Isaiah 9, Jesus also fulfilled Isaiah 9. Wonderful counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, Prince of peace sitting on the throne of David. There's another prophecy that is fulfilled by Jesus because Matthew mentioned Jesus, he was called Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. And this is the fulfillment of Isaiah 53,

5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

We have gone astray and he came to save us, to bring us back, we have to turn back to the way of God. So you see, three prophecies from Isaiah fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The first thing that might hinder us from taking Matthew seriously is this. Some of us being alert with notice, there is an apparent contradiction there. In Isaiah 7, it is very clearly stated that, that son shall be called Emmanuel, but the angel told both Joseph and Mary, he shall be called Jesus. It should be Emmanuel, why Jesus?

Well, we have to recognize that name in the Bible very often does not mean how we call another. Name represent who he is. We pray in the name of Jesus. The name stands for who he is, what he has done. Look at Isaiah 9:6,

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,

These are His names. So obviously the name in Isaiah 7 and 9 is not talking about how he was actually called, who he is. God with us, all mighty God, everlasting father. That means the baby born on Christmas Day is God himself. The anticipation, when he comes that he comes is God himself. And Jesus. Why? Jesus means the Lord saves. Jesus stands for savior, also represent who he is and what he will do, savior. In other words, both Matthew and the prophecies upon which it is based clearly teaches that Jesus is Lord and savior. Not only savior, but Lord, King of Kings, Lord of Lords. So this is who Jesus is. Savior to save us from our sins. He died on the cross to pay the price of sin.

You know, it is mind boggling to think that the baby born on Christmas Day, the man who was crucified on the cross is God himself, the one who created the heavens and the earth, the one who say, let there be light and there is light. That person, that God born as baby and died on the cross for our sin. How then should we respond? We have to deeply understand who he is and why he came.

He came as the Lord to rule, presently rule within the church. Ultimately, when he comes again to rule over all creation. And he came to save and to die on the cross for our sin. So, Jesus fulfilled three prophecies based on this text.

The second thing that might hinder us from taking this text seriously is, because in recent times there has been this idea that Isaiah 7:14 was not really referring to Jesus Christ, but to a baby born during the time when Isaiah gave the prophecy, that was 735 BC. Traditionally, the church belief and as Matthew quoted, Isaiah 7:14 talking about Jesus Christ. But the sad thing is they are more and more Bible scholars, including those who are Christians who

fully believe that the Bible is the word of God who say, Jesus fulfill that secondarily. The primary fulfillment happened during the time of Ahaz, the King to whom the prophecy was given as a sign.

During the time of Ahaz, he was under pressure from two kingdoms in the North, the Northern kingdom called Israel and Syria, and he was frightened. He wanted to appeal to Assyria, the empire to deal with the problem. Isaiah came to him and say, do not do that, trust the Lord to solve the problem. Ask for a sign, any sign to prove that God will solve the problem, any sign at all. He refused to ask for a sign and Isaiah said, you do want a sign, I give you a sign and this is a sign, Isaiah 7:14. So people say, well, if this is a sign for Ahaz, how can it be rephrased to Jesus Christ 700 years later? The sign is of no use to Ahaz. That is not a major problem. The major problem is this in Isaiah 7:16 it says,

16 for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

In other words, it is a prediction that before the boy who is in the womb that he's talking about become about 13 years old, the two Kings that you dread, their land which is the Northern kingdom, Israel and Syria will be laid waste. Sure enough, within 13 years the two kingdoms were exiled, Syria in 722 BC and Israel 722 BC. The prophecy was fulfilled, but the problem is if that boy, before he was 13, the two kingdoms are devastated that means he must be born then, He must be born around 735 BC, So how can that be Jesus Christ. So this is the most difficult problem.

Now, I do not want to go to the technical details, I just gave you a solution that has been given by two great Old Testament scholars. You see, God speak to the prophets to vision and dreams. When Isaiah said behold the virgin he was not referring to a virgin who was alive then, he was talking about the virgin he saw in his vision, and as far as the prophecy is concerned, that virgin existed then in his vision. He was using that vision as a point of reference. Before the boy who is going to be born from that virgin is 13 years old, these two kingdoms will be exiled. In other words he is saying, within 13 years from now, these two kingdom will be exiled and it was fulfilled. So, in other words, the vision he saw has double purpose. The first purpose is a point of reference to predict the destruction of the two kingdoms. Another purpose, because it is Mary 700 years later is a prophecy concerning the virgin birth. So, there is no problem. Then, how it is a sign to Ahaz. Read on to 17,

17 The Lord will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah—he will bring the king of Assyria.”

This happened in 701 BC when the Assyrian King, Sennacherib came down and invaded Judah, recorded in three books of the Old Testament, 2-Kings, 2-Chronicles and Isaiah. It is a very devastating event. The sign is this, because Ahaz refused to trust in God and trusted in Assyria, God is saying, Assyria will come and invade your kingdom. So the sign is this, if within 13 years you see those two kingdoms devastated you can be certain that the Assyrian will come and invade your kingdom. That was the sign.

So in other words, Isiah was confirmed as a prophet, so therefore Isaiah 7:14 concerning the virgin birth was very firm. That's why there could be an anticipation that Christ would come. So, this should not be a hindrance for those of us who are aware. You see, it used to be limited to the world of scholars and academics, but this idea has somehow gone beyond that because the NIV Bible present this view. Those are you don't about this. Well. Now you know, but there's no problem. Those of you who are aware, be assured there is no problem. We can take

Isaiah's prophecy and Matthew's quotation seriously as Jesus fulfilled that prophecy. So that we can take the text seriously and respond to who Jesus is accordingly.

The second supposed problem that might hinder us from taking the teaching of Matthew seriously is the virgin birth. The virgin birth means a miracle. How can a baby be born when there is no embryo, as we know it, but we are told that it is a Holy spirit who brought it about, it is a miracle, but in the modern world, we cannot accept miracles, the modern mind and from personal experience I know that even though we believe in God and Jesus Christ, our mind may still have difficulty to fully embrace all the teaching in the Bible, especially the miraculous.

You know why? Because in the modern world, modern science assumes that whatever science cannot explain, cannot discover is not real and this has influenced our mindset. From personal experience, I know as a Christian we can struggle, accepting not only intellectually, emotionally what the bible teaches, in this case, the virgin birth. We need to be able to accept this teaching that Jesus was born of a virgin.

Science cannot discover the spiritual. The nature of science is based on observation, observation on what we can see and touch. Science cannot deal with the spiritual world because the spiritual cannot be observed. The very metal of science depends on the observation. Whatever cannot be observed, science cannot touch, and they are honest scientists who recognize that. The spiritual world is beyond science, so it is very arrogant of science to say, whatever science cannot discover or explain does not exist, but that is the assumption of science and have infiltrated our minds.

Way back when I was doing Form 6, I was away from home and have a roommate. One day, my roommates' sister asked a Christian friend to share Christ with him. So, they were out in the living room talking, I don't know what happened. When he came back, he told me, Oh, my sister's friend came and talk about Jesus Christ. And he said, I told her, we don't believe in God because we study science. And I told him, yes we study science, we don't believe in God. Nowhere in science textbook nowhere, that I have heard from my science teachers that the we study science there is no God. Where did we get it from?

The very nature of science assumes that whatever science cannot discover doesn't exist. So that idea got into me and as late as 10 years ago, I still had a problem with this. I have no problem with the virgin birth and all the miracles in the Bible, despite my scientific mindset. But there was one thing that I was struggling with. You see in Deuteronomy chapter 11, God promised the nation of Israel. When you go into the land, you cannot Like in Egypt depend on irrigation to the Nile River, you need to trust God for rain, to have a good harvest, but God said obey me and I will send the rain, the early and the late rain. Whenever you obey me, the rain will come on time. In other words, it will be a regular miracle if they obey God, and intellectually I had to accept it because this is the word of God, but emotionally I struggle and couldn't accept that. How could miracle be regular. From my observation for the testimony I hear, miracles are random. It doesn't happen regularly on a schedule, and I read the Bible, the miracles recorded are not regular, so I couldn't accept it because of my scientific mindset. So we understand, if we struggle emotionally, we are teaching the Bible that we find hard to accept, I understand that because our modern mindset has difficulty, we absorb that mindset.

I asked my wife, I said do you have a problem with this, she said no problem. Then I knew the problem is with me, not with the Bible. So, then I was studying the Old Testament and God said, this is the land where he will dwell with his people through the tabernacle, a land that he cares about, is a holy land, it is unusual piece of land. So,

this is unusual piece of land, so do you expect the regular observation outside of the Holy land to apply? And that is what my problem, oh yeah this is not regular land, this is a holy land, so we don't expect miracles to happen randomly outside, it can happen regularly inside. Then emotionally I can fully accept. So now I can fully accept everything the Bible teaches.

But some of you may be struggling with the virgin birth. We need to be able to accept that Christ was miraculously conceived and born from a virgin, because if he was not born of a virgin, he is not God. It is so crucial. Then the question arises, why must the savior be God and Man. You see the savior must be God and man, but why? We understand why he must be a man. Because if he is only God, God cannot die. He has to become man to die, and he came to die on the behalf of humanity. So, he has to be man to represent us. So that he die for us. He was raised for us, ascended for us we can be fully identified with him. So, he has to be man, but why must he be God? Why God cannot create another Adam, sinless and let this Adam die for our sins? Yes, he did send another Adam, this Adam was Jesus Christ, but this Adam is uncreated, it is God. He was conceived and became a man through the Holy spirit in the womb of Mary.

Why must the savior be God?

We have to understand the nature of forgiveness. What does it mean to forgive someone? If you say, I wrong you or I did something wrong. You know, you went for a interview for a good job and they have decided to accept you, to inform you that you are successful, it is a good job that I have been looking for, well-paying job, but somehow I got connection with the people in the company and I spread rumors about you. Something that is not true and they rescinded the offer, so I wrong you, you suffered a loss of a well-paying job. So, you say I want to sue you for compensation, 100,000 Ringgit. I don't have that kind of money, so I come and see Pastor Ling, I said Pastor Ling this member from your church he wants to sue me, can you talk to him to forgive me. So, he went and talk to him. You must forgive one another, but the person is not interested in forgiving. Pastor Ling say, that person is not forgiving you, but I forgive you.

Can you do that? No. Only the person that have done wrong and forgive me, not a third party. And what does it mean for you to forgive me? That means you no longer sue me, you absorb the loss, you absorb the consequence of my wrong. So the nature of forgiveness first of all, only the person that I have done wrong can forgive me and if the person would have forgiven me, that person will absorb the consequence of my wrong.

Sin is against God; therefore only God can forgive sin. For this, God himself must absorb the consequence of our sin and death is the consequence of our sin. Therefore, God must come and die for our sin, God himself must bear the consequences of our sin, it is not the third party.

When Christ came to die on the cross, he came as the God we have sinned against, he is the creator God, he did not come as a third party, he came as the first party, the party we sinned against. To absorb the consequence of our sin, to die on the cross for our sins. Therefore, our savior must be God and man. Jesus is Lord and savior.

When we understand this truth, based on what we see in the scripture, how then should we respond to Jesus Christ. I do want to offer my own opinion, even though we can easily infer based on what we have seen, who Jesus is and what why he came. He came to rule, he came to save and he is God the Lord. In Isaiah itself, after predicting the savior, the Messiah dying for his people, Isaiah 55 talk about how we are to respond. Further emphasize on Isaiah 56. Those teachings are fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist. Isaiah 40 talk about the coming of John the

Baptist, how we have to respond as prophesied in Isaiah 55 and 56, first embodied in the teaching of John the Baptist.

John the Baptist came ahead of the ministry of Christ to prepare the way for Christ ministry and what was his ministry all about, the baptism of repentance. And there were some religious people who came to be baptized and he doubted their sincerity. He said, who warned you against the coming wrath and he challenged them. If you truly repent, bear fruit of repentance. Demonstrate that your repentance is sincere through the fruit of repentance. That means good works, a changed life through obedience to God.

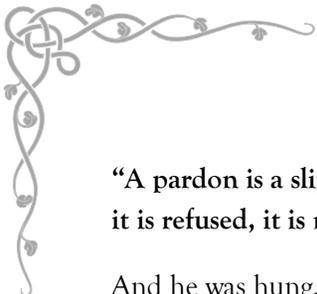
There is a difference between repentance and the fruit of repentance. Repentance is not good works. Repentance is change of mind and change of heart, change of attitude. In other words, repentance is change of intention. Come before God and say, God I have sinned, I repent and from now on I don't want to sin anymore, from now onwards I want to obey you. Isn't that the proper respond to who Jesus is, Lord and savior? Is just a change of intention? Of course, we still sin, no matter how deep our intention is, the spirit is willing, the flesh is weak but we are not saved by works, we are saved by grace through faith, but repentance demonstrate a turning point in our life that from now on I want to obey God. I don't want to sin, and whenever I sin, I confess my sin and accept the forgiveness of Christ. This is not good works. Repentance is not good works, but genuine repentance will bear fruit of repentance.

So, what happens is this, when we truly repent and believe in Jesus, we trust in him, we are converted in that sense. The Holy spirit comes in and change our heart, give us a new heart, a new spirit and dwell in us. The spirit of God will empower us to live out our repentance, to live out our intention, not to sin and obey God but we must first repent. Then spirit comes in, change our heart, empower us to live out the repentance and bear fruit of repentance. You say that is John the Baptist, is it what the New Testament teaches? What about Paul, the apostle to gentiles? This is what Paul said. He was on trial before King Agrippa. He was trying to demonstrate that he had been faithful to his calling through his preaching, and this is what they said in Acts 26:19

19 "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. 20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.

Repentance means turn away from sin to God. You can turn away from sin but do something else, it is not repentance in biblical sense. Repentance always away from sin to God, because we have sin and we have been alienated from God, we have to come back to God. Someone say, I repent, I don't want the sin but I am not coming back to God. It is not repentance, it may be some other repentance, not repentance in the biblical sense. Repentance in the biblical sense is turn away from sin to God.

That means even though Christ death on the cross is sufficient for every human being, that forgiveness is available to every human being, but not everyone will experience the forgiveness. Why? There's a strange case in the United States in 1829. George Houston was convicted of robbery and murder, to be sentenced to death, to be hanged. For some reason, the president Andrew Jackson pardon him. But unexpectedly, Josh Wilson refused the pardon. So the whole case gone to the Supreme Court, and this is the decision of the Supreme Court. The chief justice John Marshall read out the decision of the Supreme court. He says,



“A pardon is a slip of paper, the value of which is determined by the acceptance of the person to be pardoned. If it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must be hanged.”

And he was hung. Christ death on the cross is sufficient for all human beings, the forgiveness is available for all, but it will not be a forgiveness until it is accepted. It is unimaginable for someone who is under the death sentence, spiritual death will not except the pardon but if it is not accepted it is no pardon. We will bear the consequences of our sin.

Why did George Wilson refuse the pardon? I really don't know, but there is a parallel case in Malaysia recently that might help us understand. Remember, Anwar Ibrahim, they were discussing about getting a royal pardon, and he stated very clearly, I am not guilty. I don't a pardon if I am required to admit guilt. So, when he was finally pardoned, he said it is not because I'm guilty, but because of miscarriage of justice and Agong also agreed. His pardon is based on miscarriage of justice in the court, not because he is guilty. But there is the wrong use of term, pardon means you are guilty. The very nature, what Anwar Ibrahim received was not a pattern, but an annulment. The wording was annulled. Because if you believe he is not guilty, he needs not to be pardoned. Pardon assumed guilt.

Suppose this is the case with George Wilson, in order to receive the pardon he must admit guilt, perhaps he refused to admit guilt, refused to repent therefore he was hung in the same way. How do we respond to Jesus Christ? We must admit guilt. We are sinners, condemned to hell. Then willing to repent and to receive the forgiveness.

Repentance means from now on, I do not want to sin anymore, I want to obey God, and this is the thing. When we get the repentance, we need to live in repentance through our lives. Confess our sins whenever we fail to obey God. That is how we respond to Jesus Christ appropriately because he is Lord and savior.