

Series: Isaiah

Lesson # 17

Title: **For Signs and For Wonders**

Scripture: Isaiah 8:18

Date: 12-21-08

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church of Princeton, New Jersey

What does the birth of Christ mean to you? The birth of Jesus Christ declares with unmistakable clarity three great truths. One, the birth of Christ declares our desperate need of salvation. Two, the birth of Christ declares that we are totally and completely unable to save ourselves. (Nothing less than the Son of God coming in human flesh and offering himself as a sacrifice for my sin could save me from myself.) Three, the birth of Christ declares the love and grace of God who as both God and Man perfectly, completely, fully accomplished the eternal redemption of those he everlastingly loved.

We have been going through the book of Isaiah and we find ourselves this week right in the middle of those two familiar passages which multitudes are hearing preached this time of year.

Isaiah 7: 14: Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. 15: Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.

Isaiah 9: 6: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. 7: Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Our text this morning is in Isaiah 8: **18: Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me *are* for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.**

These are the words of the LORD of hosts by which he sanctifies himself in the hearts of his people. He spoke to Isaiah with a strong hand, instructing him, saying, **12: Say ye not, A confederacy, to all *them* to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. 13: Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and *let him be* your fear, and *let him be* your dread. 14: And he shall be for a sanctuary....16: Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.** Then in verses 17 and 18 the LORD of hosts testifies of his word of grace. By doing so he sanctifies himself in the hearts of his children--binds up and seals his testimony among us--thus separates us in Christ our Sanctuary.

The testimony of the LORD of hosts must be a powerful word of grace to do all that! Indeed it is. Would you be interested in hearing that word for yourself! Would it soothe your troubled soul to know why the LORD himself shall forever be the sanctuary of all who trust him alone! Here it is in Isaiah 8: **17: And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.**

The LORD of heaven and earth requires absolute, perfect obedience and implicit trust in him from all his children. He requires that his sinless servants look to him with the unwavering confidence that a little child has toward their father. Yet, that is something that not one of his adopted sons and daughter had the power to perform.

Throughout the book of Isaiah--throughout the Old Testament--the people of Israel are set before God's true Israel as a mirror so that every individual child of God may behold what he is by nature. In simple language the LORD declares why his Son had to come in human flesh. **Isaiah 1: 2: Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.** This is why Jesus Christ the Son of God came into this world.

Condemned because of our transgression against God, we lived in sin, alienated from God, not knowing God and unable to know him. Many of us gladly received the scriptures but we used the word of the LORD unlawfully, attempting to come to him by our own hand. Time and time again we read a verse like **Isaiah 1: 11: To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD.** We read passages such as Isaiah 1: 16-20: **Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, 17: Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 18: Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. 19: If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: 20: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.**

Therefore, we reformed our lives and conducted ourselves in what we truly thought was obedience in all our dealings with the oppressed, the fatherless, and the widow. Yet, we were unable to acknowledge the depth of the scarlet crimson stain of our sin. We were unable to understand, much less believe, the absolute inability for anyone to make us accepted of God but God himself. We never considered that the evil which the LORD instructed us to put away was the evil of looking to our own will and our own obedience. Thus we continued eating the husks of swine rather than the good of the land, that is, our Savior, the Bread of Life. We lived by the sword of our strength and were devoured with the sword of our strength. This is why in Bethlehem, unto us a child was born, unto us a son was given.

We imagined ourselves the faithful city, while in truth we played the harlot against God. Murder lodged in our hearts. In our spiritual death the riches of Christ were pure dross to us. We mixed the pure wine of grace with the polluted water of our works. In our personal lives, and in our daily dealings, we pleased ourselves with those who were strangers before God. Our affection was set on the treasures of this world and by all appearances we prospered greatly. Yet, our foolishness of thinking ourselves safe and secure in the strength of these things was as foolish as looking to the strength of a horse and a chariot to save us from God's wrath. We were our idols--the works of our hands and the treasures of our heart. That is why the government of the universe, the earth, and the church of God was laid on the shoulder of that one laid in a manger.

In our haughtiness we boasted of our will and exalted the power of man to a lofty position. Thinking we heard the LORD, we could not hear; thinking we saw, we could not see. The LORD repeatedly sent his messengers saying, **Isaiah 2: 22: Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?** We said, "Amen!" with our lips, but in our hearts we counted ourselves true and God a liar. Our stay and our staff was our own might. We were our own judge, our own prophet. Self was the one we regarded as the prudent, wise old man. We esteemed ourselves honorable. We considered our own council more valuable than any other (Is 3: 1-3.) That is why the Wonderful Counsellor--the Advocate of his children--was formed in the womb of a virgin by the Holy Ghost.

Isaiah 8: 17: Because we would not believe the LORD, because in our depravity we COULD not sanctify the LORD of hosts himself, therefore the LORD of hosts, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, revealed himself in us, declaring, **I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.**

What does that verse mean? It means that Christ Jesus was born to do--AND DID--for his brethren what his brethren could never do themselves. The children which the LORD gave to the Son had to be brought into holiness; they had to be delivered and separated from guilt, pollution, and death; they had to be brought into the presence of God by their High Priest eternally perfected so that God would be pleased to descend into their souls and make them partakers of his Divine nature.

This most amazing work would manifest the righteousness of God as just and their Justifier. This work would require the sin bearer be a man, a perfect man with perfect faith, a perfect man whose faith was so perfect that he would willingly be made sin for those he came to save, a perfect man whose faith was so perfect that even when God hid his face from him in eternal, fierce wrath he would yet wait upon the LORD and look for him. The righteousness of God was manifest in the faithfulness of that perfect Man. **Romans 3: 21: But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22: Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ.** The righteousness of God is manifest by the faithfulness of Christ Jesus with these most precious words of grace, **Isaiah 8: 17: I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the**

house of Jacob, and I will look for him. That is what is required by God to bring his children into his presence. That is why the Lord Jesus was born.

This is the testimony, the witness, the word of grace of the LORD of hosts himself by which he sanctifies himself in the hearts of his children.

Now we come to our text: this is the LORD of hosts bearing witness of why none of his children can be lost, of why he shall be a sanctuary for each of them:

Isaiah 8: 18: Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me *are* for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

I want to look for a moment as this phrase: **FOR SIGNS AND FOR WONDERS.**

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST IS FOR A SIGN AND FOR WONDERS IN ISRAEL.

The word "sign" means covenant.

Isaiah 7:14: Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isaiah 9: 6: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is GIVEN.

Isaiah 42: 6: I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

The Lord Jesus Christ said, no sign shall be given, but he himself because in him the covenant of God with his children is ordered in all things and sure.

Christ is, in hearts of his people, as the Rainbow in the heart of Noah: **Isaiah 54:9: For this *is as* the waters of Noah unto me: for *as* I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.** And as David said, he is all their salvation.

The word "wonder" has to do with him being the express image of God; the extraordinary exhibition whereby God declares himself.

Hebrews 1: 1: God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2: Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; 3: Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; 4: Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Colossians 1: 18: And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence. 19: For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell;

- His name is Wonderful.

- His person is Wonderful. He is God and Man; Our High Priest, our Savior, is the LORD of hosts while at the same time he is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Can you think of anything more wonderful?
- His love to his people is wonderful. He laid down his life for his friends.
- His doctrines and miracles, including his life and death are all for wonders.
- His reign is Wonderful.

Isaiah 9: 7: Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Isaiah 12:6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great *is* the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

He is a sign to the believer even when we behold those who reject him and label him an imposter. The scriptures declare him to be so:

Luke 2:34: And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this *child* is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;

Isaiah 8: 14: He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

This sign and wonderful manifestation of God's glory is not at all what the natural man perceives to be glorious. For many, the thought of a virgin conceiving a baby called that "holy thing" "of the Holy Ghost" is too far fetched? And until the Holy Ghost forms Christ in you, it will continue to be! The thought that the infant laying in a donkey trough in Bethlehem is truly the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father is irreconcilable with man's image of the Messiah. When reading that this Jesus was tempted in all points like his brethren, that he suffered the feeling of our infirmities, that he believed God, prayed to the Father, was strengthened by the Father, it makes him to be so much a Man, like unto the children he came to save, that this is basis of rejection by many. Multitudes behold him on a criminal's cross, spit upon and mocked by mere men, appearing as if men had power over him, and thus they stumble in disbelief that this could be the wisdom by which God forever perfected his people? For most, when they behold his body placed in a tomb it is to wondrous to believe that his body is no longer there but is risen and glorified in heaven.

Equally, if not more offensive, is the truth that he came to do and did the work that his people could not do for themselves--he honored his law as our Representative, he paid the wages of sin as our Substitute, he is raised from the grave and his children in him. Truthfully, man by nature does not think he needs God; he wants to bring himself to God; and he wants the glory that belongs to God our Savior.

Therefore, for all these reasons, Christ is a cumbersome stone which men stumble over. He is a snare in which their feet become entangled. **I Timothy 3: 16: And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.**

THE CHILDREN GIVEN HIM ARE FOR SIGNS AND FOR WONDERS

First, the children are signs and wonders of God's great love to condescend to make himself one with them.

The children were set apart for the Son of God when God chose them in his Son before time began. Because the Son of God was the one to whom the children were given, the Son of God willingly entered into covenant agreement in eternity to be the Son given for them. **Hebrews 2: 14: Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15: And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16: For verily he took not on *him* the nature of angels; but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham.** He is a Son over his own house.

They were sanctified by him by, first, by the work which he performed for them, and secondly, by him sending forth the Spirit and word of grace into their hearts. Therefore, here is an amazing sign and wonder concerning these children. He is not ashamed to call them brethren. What a sign and wonder of grace! The Holy Spirit bears witness that this is the very meaning of our text. Listen to **Hebrews 2: 11: For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12: Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. 13: And again, I will put my trust in him.** (from Is 8: 17) **And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me** (from Is 8: 18.)...**17: Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. 18: For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. 3: 1: Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;**

Secondly, the children are signs and wonders of his sovereign power to bring them to rest in him alone.

Behold the sign and wonder of grace in that we who were once dead in trespasses and in sins, who hated God with all we are, now entrust our eternal well-being into his hands and we believe him.

Let me show you how he does this? The law of God says, "Thou shalt and thou shalt not." Repeatedly, the LORD God says, **Leviticus 19:2: Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God *am***

holy. Before the Holy Spirit formed Christ in us, we thought the law was a recommendation. We were like king Uzziah, with our hearts lifted up within us, thinking we could actually be God. We tried our hardest to by-pass God's priest and come to God through our obedience to his law. We were alive without the law once as we did our dead level best to keep it. But when the commandment came from the LORD of hosts in Zion, sin revived, in that year, that season of his love, us king Uzziah's died. We beheld the Lord high and lifted up. We cried out, "Woe is me! I am undone!" But the angel of the LORD brought a live coal--the live coal of his word of grace--from Christ our Altar, and he placed it on our tongue, he put his word in our mouths and in our hearts and said, "**Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.**" In that hour, our faithful Redeemer revealed that the LORD himself, Christ Jesus our Savior, honored and magnified his own law for us, he established us in perfect faithfulness before his Holy Throne.

For the first time we ceased hearing his law as a recommendation and began hearing it as a declaration, "Thou shalt, became thou HAST, because I have." "Thou shalt not, became thou HAST NOT, because I have not." "Thou shalt be holy, became thou ART HOLY, for I the LORD your God am holy." But what about our guilt--our former sins and the sins we shall yet commit? The Lord testified of his word of grace in our hearts, saying, **Isaiah 43:25: I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins; 44:22: I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Acts 22:16: And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized,** and confess that what I have done, calling on my name. **THIS IS THE VERY THING THAT ISIAH DECLARES THE LORD SAID TO HIM, SANCTIFY THE LORD OF HOST, FEAR AND PUT YOUR CONFIDENCE IN ME, I SHALL BE FOR A SANCTUARY. HE SAID, I WILL WAIT ON THE LORD AS YOUR REPRESENTATIVE AND SUBSTITUTE. FOR I AND THE CHILDREN THE LORD HATH GIVEN ME ARE FOR SIGNS AND WONDERS IN ISREAL FROM THE LORD OF HOSTS.** And amazing sign and wonder of all signs and wonders, we believe him! And we continue believing him! We who once boasted only in ourselves, now boast only in our Lord and Savior. Listen to David: **Psalm 71:7: I am as a wonder unto many; but thou art my strong refuge.**

If it were possible for one of those children which were given to him, to perish before being brought to faith in him, HE would cease being any kind of sign and wonder at all?

These children are signs and wonders of his grace as they are rejected by this world.

Illustration: How cool it is to be a Christian!

Religion thinks that the believer--being called "the light of the world"--will somehow shine forth before this world in such a way that the world will be captivated and drawn to you like a moth to a flame. **John 3: 19: And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20: For**

every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

John 17:6: I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word....14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

John 15: 19: If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. 20: Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

That is not exactly the kind of sign and wonder the apostles and disciples were before the eyes of the world. Listen to the apostle Paul's description: **1Corinthians 4:9: For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. 10:...we *are* despised.** (But here is why the Lord has left us in a world that hates us) **11: Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; 12: And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: 13: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, *and are* the offscouring of all things unto this day.**

The way the world treated Christ is the way the world shall treat those who trust him. But he chose it to be so that we might continually learn to cast our care upon him. That is why he continues to send forth an Isaiah, with his word of grace. That is why the LORD from mount Zion continues to testify in our hearts. He continues to cry into our souls ever reminding us, that he stands before us and before God, with but one cry before God and in the hearts of his regenerated people, and it is this, "**I waited on him that hid his face from Jacob. Behold, Me! AS I AM, SO ARE YOU! Behold, these thou hast given me! AS I AM, SO ARE THEY!**" He would have us bind up this testimony and seal it among his disciples until he seals every last one in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

WHAT I AM TRYING TO SAY IS THIS: HE IS THE SIGN AND WONDER FROM THE LORD OF HOSTS, WHICH DWELLETH IN MOUNT ZION.

Don't try to wrap your mind around this, it ain't big enough. But he is his own Covenant with himself and in the hearts of his children. He is his own Word of Promise of grace with himself and with his children. He is the Fullness which filleth all in all.

Look one more time at Isaiah 7: 14: **Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; the sign is this: The LORD himself!--a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. God with us. Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins.**

That is why a child was born unto us, and unto us a son was given.

Now if someone asks you, what Christmas means to you, you can say, "Not one thing." But God who came in human flesh means to me: **an everlasting covenant, ordered in all *things*, and sure: for *this is all my salvation, and all my desire.***

May the Lord sanctify himself in your hearts this very hour that *you* may behold him as he is. I guarantee if he does, he shall be for a sign of assurance where you will rest in wondrous amazement and adoration of him. May the LORD bless you.