

Signs of His Coming, 12.24.06

Introduction: 1. One of our church's values is hearing from & following God...individually this is critical...collectively as both a local body and the body of Christ that we listen to the Lord and make ourselves ready; 2. The first advent their were huge markers that the Lord was doing something...God speaking loud and clear. 3. Romans 8 creation is groaning for the full revelation of God's people

Key idea: Just as the Father announced in many ways the coming of his Son the first time, so He's doing the same with His Son's second appearance and we must respond appropriately.

Signs of His First Coming

- Angelic appearances:
 - An angel appears on three separate occasions in Joseph's dreams to give him direction (Mt.1.20–25; 2.13–15; 2.19–22).
 - Gabriel the archangel appears to Zechariah & Mary to announce the birth of John & Jesus (Luke 1.11–20; 1.26–38).
 - The angel of the Lord and a host of angels appear to the shepherds (Luke 2.8–15)

- Astronomical markers (natural order) Matt.2.1–12
 - The heavens proclaim – Ps.19
 - Romans
 - They studied this sign and had some amazing information – a child; King; Jewish; brought gifts for royalty...this wasn't a day trip
 - Starofbethlehem.net The angel Gabriel appears to Mary and declares the purposes of God in and through her.

- Dreams
 - The magi had a warning dream (Mt.2.12)
 - Joseph had a warning dream (Mt.2.22). This was different than the other dreams b/c there was no angel.
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- The Scripture (Mt.2.4–6)
 - Prophetic Scripture about the location of the Messiah's birth

- The inner witness of the Holy Spirit

- John leaping inside the womb of Elizabeth (Luke 1.15 – have the HS from the womb; 1.41)
- Elizabeth’s proclamation (Luke 1.42–45)
- Simeon (Luke 2. 25–35)
- Anna (Luke 2.36–38)
- Cultural Circumstances
 - The calling of the census (Luke 2.1–7). This took Mary & Joseph to the prophesied birth place. They didn’t make it happen. God orchestrated the event & location.
 - Culturally, there was an expectation of the Messiah’s advent. The atmosphere was supercharged with expectation. Even today that is somewhat prevalent in our world.

The People’s response to the signs

- Obedience (Joseph)
- Diligent seeking (Magi)
- Fear (Herod & all Jerusalem)
- Ambivalence (the religious leaders)
- Disbelief (Zechariah)
- Acceptance (Mary)
- Praise (Shepherds)
- Gratefulness (Simeon)
- Summary:
 - The vast majority of people were curious, but left unchanged. The curiosity seekers or the one who were caught up in the headlines probably didn’t stick. It was something they were reacting to, not something they were seeking after/strongly pursuing.
 - Matt.13 – Parable of the Seeds
 - I believe those who were impacted the most were the one it was the most personal to: Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna & the Magi.
 - Most people saw a baby & only a few saw their Savior.

Signs of His Second Coming

(Mt.24, Luke 21, Revelation)

- The earth is in labor pains – severe climatic & geologic conditions
- Greater conflict
- Increase of lawlessness & wickedness

- Signs in the sky
- Increased angelic & demonic activity
- False signs, miracles & teachers
- Increased persecution of Christians & Jews
- Gospel preached to everyone
- The Bride of Christ is purified
- Greater unity, maturity & power in the Bride of Christ
- The largest ingathering of souls in history
- Greatest outpouring of the Holy Spirit in history

Our Response to the signs

1. Attentiveness/watchfulness – Joseph

- When God spoke to Joseph he hopped to it; he didn't wait to see how things played out; he walked through the stigma (people saying Mary is crazy) & misunderstanding (tacit statement that he was the dad) & possible derision.
- His immediate obedience kept him in the middle of God's will; he had no idea he was fulfilling prophecy by being obedient to the Lord's desires
- In this end time generation, God is looking for people who will immediately respond to his voice...who are looking for the signs, and will respond promptly.
- We must look into the Word & the world and see what God is saying & doing
- There were 1000's of really good people who missed the birth of Jesus not b/c they didn't know about it, but they didn't act on what they knew to be true...they were so absorbed in life they missed the author of Life.
- We must be attentive to the signs of his return and be like the five wise virgins, who were prepared.

2. Seek to understand the meaning – Magi

- They sought to understand the meaning of the star and traveled for months to see its fulfillment
- When it comes to the end time events, we need to seek their deeper meaning; 100,000's people saw the star, but only three went to seek the fullest meaning
- 1 Peter 1.10–12 – They earnestly sought to discover when Jesus was coming.

- You can't casually brush aside the signs and say it has no impact for you.
- It impacts the way you live. Your focus is on the Lord and your priorities fall into line.
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- www.starofbethlehem.net
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3. Ponder – Mary

- She treasured these things like any other proud mother, but moreover she thought deeply about them. Word means to “mull over.”
- Her faith was developing too and she didn't have perfect understanding of all that was unfolding. She thought deeply about these things and tried to make sense of them. She didn't lay them aside or relegate them to the “one day I'll understand in eternity” category. She
- Here we are trying to make sense of the signs of Jesus second coming. We sense the time is short. There are some obvious signs, but we aren't sure what they all mean and how they fit together.
- We need to think deeply about these things, so we can give understanding to our sphere of influence when the birth pains increase over the planet. As the shaking of the planet intensifies, we need to be able to make sense of it for loved ones. How can we rectify the God the Judge with the God of love? Dan.12.3 is spoken w/in an end time context.
- We need to ponder the things in the word & world and provide a grid for those seeking the truth.

4. Consecration – Simeon/Anna

- God gave them both a sense of the Messiah's birth. They both lived lives dedicated to God & His kingdom.
- The closer the Lord's return draws near the easier it will become even more essential that we are wholly focused on God.
- The spiritual climate of the planet will intensify with so much demonic oppression, sinfulness, lawlessness and calamity that if we aren't walking close to the Lord we will quickly fall away from the truth.

- I am surprised at believers who are falling into deception...doctrines of demons...lies of the enemy who are Bible believing Christians.
- Let's not fool ourselves into thinking, we wouldn't fall into deception...that we would be spiritually alert at the Lord's return...every day we need to be wholly consecrated to the Lord.
- There were 100's of people who were in Jerusalem the day that Jesus was dedicated at the temple. Some listened, but most just kept walking...good, solid, Bible believing, Law abiding, dutiful, Jews. The king of the universe was cradled in Mary's arms and all they could say is, "Cute baby."
- Let's have our minds & hearts fully engaged with Jesus & His kingdom

5. Joy & Praise – the Shepherds

- They went and loudly proclaimed the truth and were filled with joy!
- Talking about the Lord's second coming really depresses some people, but it shouldn't. The people of Jerusalem were fearful and afraid when they heard about the Messiah. They didn't embrace him...they were too afraid of the consequences.
- If you grow afraid of the Lord's second coming and it makes you depressed, you are focusing too much on the darkness and not enough on the Light...to much on how it will impact your life and no enough on what it means for the planet.
- Thinking about the Lord's return ought to create a level of concern, but mostly it should foster praise in your spirit. It means the Lord is at the door

Conclusion:

The amazing thing is that thousands of people heard and saw the activity of God surrounding His Son's first advent, yet only a few scratched beyond the surface to try and make sense of it.

So here we are, 2000 years down the road from the first advent of Jesus. Now we are anticipating His Return. The Scripture is clear that before His appearance there will be signs in the sky and on the earth. It is also clear that only those who are spiritually alert will hear God's voice and prepare their hearts.

This Christmas as we celebrate His first coming, let us also open our spiritual ears to the Father's announcements of His Son's Second Coming.

He who has ears, let him hear!