The Birth Of The Bread Of Life

The prophet Isaiah wrote his book of sixty-six chapters under the oversight and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. As a prophet he foresaw and therefore wrote in his book the impending doom looming on the horizon for the people of God. That doom would find its ultimate fulfillment in the victorious conquests of the Assyrians and the Babylonians. For God's people in the sixth and seventh centuries before Christ his prophecies were fearful and discouraging.

But what is sometimes missed — or at least ignored — by some interpreters is that, as is common with Hebrew prophecy, Isaiah, like his contemporary prophetic brothers, associated promises of eternal peace and redemption and judgment with those near-future events that loomed on the horizon. Two such promises appear early in his book.

In chapter 7, verse 14, are these familiar words to us who are Christians: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

In chapter 9, verses 6 and 7 are these familiar words: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder."

And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Of course we correctly understand these two prophecies to be speaking of the miraculous birth, the marvelous names, and the magnificent kingdom of Christ. They cannot and must not be overlooked or ignored by the church. And they are not. In most congregations at least once each year the people of God focus their attention upon each of these important components in the life of Christ. They make a special acknowledgment of the birth of Christ — of His incarnation — of God coming to earth in human flesh.

Jesus' great discourse on the bread of life in John 6 is His personal verification of the accuracy and truthfulness of Isaiah's prophecy — particularly the one of chapter 7 and verse 14: "and shall call His name Immanuel." (We know that "Immanuel" means "God-Within-Us." And indeed He was.) Jesus said four different times, directly or indirectly, that He was the "bread of
Jesus said five different times that He, "Immanuel," "God-With-Us," "came down from heaven." In John 6:62 He asked His disciples "What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?"

Immanuel came "down" not only in the sense of from heaven to earth but in the sense of His glorified position and state of being in heaven to an evil, corrupt, sin-filled world. Paul said in Philippians 2:7 that He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." The writer of Hebrews wrote: "Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire. But a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come - In the volume of the book it is written of Me - to do Your will, O God.'" (Hebrews 10:5-7)

The purpose of the birth was to provide a Lamb of God that would once and forever take away the sin of men. Had there been no birth there would have been no cross. Had there been no cross there would have been no blood. Had there been no blood there would have been no salvation from sins. The virgin birth of Christ is an important component in our faith. It is a vital component in our faith. But it was not what saved us. It was His death. We remember His birth in particularly at this time of year every year. But we remember His death every Lord’s Day because it was in His death that atonement was made for our sins.

Paul wrote, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death (not birth) till he comes." (I Corinthians 11:26) But who can deny that there is a connection between His birth and His table? The prophets prophesied of His coming and the table prophesies His coming again. Just as Isaiah spoke absolute truth more than two-and-a-half millennia in the past that He would come the first time is the fact that Paul is speaking the truth that He is coming again. The prophets did not know the exact time that He would come and neither did Paul and nor do we know, but He is coming again and our assembling around this table proclaims that fact.

We do not proclaim the coming of a Babe who will be laid in a manger; we proclaim the coming of the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords. And if our proclamation is true, and if our proclamation is in reference to Jesus of Nazareth, the Babe who was born in Bethlehem, then our proclamation must of necessity include the truth of His resurrection. For how could He come again if He had never resurrected from the tomb? He couldn’t. But He did. And He will.

All of this was set in motion at the time of His birth as far as the earthly events that are involved in this. His birth was soon followed by His death. His death was soon followed by His resurrection. His resurrection was soon followed by the inauguration of His kingdom. And in His kingdom and as a part of His kingdom we eat of His body and drink of His blood in remembrance of Him.