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Sunday Mass Study Notes for Sunday Lectionary 10: 12/21/2025



Like last week, this week, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, we will be studying some important prophetic voices from the Old Testament. We will also be reading from the Gospel of Saint Matthew to hear how he confirmed that the coming birth of Jesus would fulfil these predictions made centuries earlier.

Introduction to the First Reading:

Before we turn to the first reading from Chapter 7 in Isaiah, we need to explain the personality of King Ahaz, the King of the Southern Tribe of Judah, about whom Isaiah will speak. Ahaz was King Jotham's son, the latter of whom was Judah's godly ruler. King Ahaz came into power when he was 20 years of age, and he went bad immediately at the beginning of his reign. Second Chronicles provides an essential insight into the personality of the King. "But he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel; he also made molten images for the Baals" (2 Chronicles 28:2). Not only was Ahaz an idolater who caused the circulation of idols to the god Baal, but he even burned his own children as

sacrifices to false gods. The Scripture said, "But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and even made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had driven out from before the sons of Israel" (2 Kings 16:3). He went from bad to worse after the attack of the King of Assyria who had already overtaken the Northern Tribes.

> *20 So Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him. 21 Although Ahaz took a portion out of the house of the LORD and out of the palace of the king and of the princes, and gave it to the king of Assyria, it did not help him. 22 Now in the time of his distress this same King Ahaz became yet more unfaithful to the LORD. 23 For he sacrificed to the gods of Damascus which had defeated him, and said, "Because the gods of the kings of Aram helped them, I will sacrifice to them that they may help me." But they became the downfall of him and all Israel. (2 Chronicles 28:20-23)*

As if that wasn't bad enough, Ahaz then went on to block the entrance to the temple to prevent the true worship of God (2 Chronicles 28:25). King Ahaz started out bad and continued in his ungodly rule until the very end of his life without ever having a change of heart or repenting of his sin. It's with this understanding of the king that we turn to the text of the first reading from Isaiah.

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> *10 Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, 11 "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven." 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" 13 Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? 14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:10-14*

The Lord allowed King Ahaz to trust in Him by asking for a sign. Instead of asking for a sign, King Ahaz spoke out of pride and self-reliance in his heart, which displeased the Lord. God had given him an invitation, and he refused to accept it. This "tried" the patience of the Lord because he persisted in his independence and refused to trust in God's provision of a sign to assure him. God used this event of obstinate disobedience to foretell the Messiah. This prophecy was ultimately fulfilled

through the birth of Jesus by the Virgin Mary.

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Because the Gospel reading relates to the prophecy of Isaiah from the first reading, we will consider that passage next. This reading is from the first chapter of the Gospel of Saint Matthew.

Gospel Reading:

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While many of us are already familiar with the narrative concerning the birth of Jesus, this passage highlights essential truths for our lives. First, Saint Matthew revealed that Jesus was born not through natural human relations but through the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit. This is important because, since God is without sin, this was the only way the sinless God-Man could come into the world. Second, since the virgin birth fulfilled biblical prophecy, we can trust other prophecies that speak to areas of our life and ministry. This includes things like how the Lord's second coming will play out and how the world will be eventually unified under Jesus' earthly reign. Third, Jesus was sent to save His people from their sins. This is God's special invitation to counteract the destructive nature of sin to stand before a Holy God and not be rejected at the judgment. This is

not only "a" plan for salvation, it is "the" plan. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

Matthew's Gospel also brings out an essential prophetic fulfillment regarding the title of Jesus as Immanuel. This title means "God with us," a crucial relationship aspect of the Messiah's advent. The Messiah reveals the heart of God as One who lives among us. The implications of Jesus being called Immanuel are twofold. First, Jesus came so we might come to the Father through Him. Second, Jesus moved into the neighborhood to stay to show us God's love so that we might live eternally with Him. Christianity is the only belief system that purports that God became a man and died for our sins. That is the powerful implication of Immanuel, God with us.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

In the second reading from Romans, Saint Paul also confirmed the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies regarding Jesus. While these are introductory remarks and salutations, many meaningful truths are contained here.

Second Reading:

> *1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, 2 which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh, 4 who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5 through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles, for His name's sake, 6 among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ; 7 to all who are beloved of God in Rome, called as saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:1-7)*

It would be easy to read this passage casually and gloss over the deep insights, but Paul confirmed the following truths about Jesus and His people.

1. Jesus' birth and ministry were predicted by Old Testament Scriptures (v.2).

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7. Jesus would establish the church's apostles, including Paul (v.5).

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9. Paul's ministry would extend to the Gentiles (v.5).

10. All believers would be called "saints" and, like the apostles, called out to ministry (v.7).

Saint Paul knew Jesus in a multifaceted way, which should be a model for us as followers of Him today. Most importantly, we need to recognize Jesus as the Son of God who was raised from the dead and lived a holy life through the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can receive His grace. Receiving His grace means that I am now in good favor with the Father and declared righteous.

Reflection Questions

1. Review the list above from the second reading in Romans 1 about Jesus. Choose one point and think about how this truth affects your life.

2. What difference does knowing that Jesus is Immanuel, "God with us," make to you?

Sunday Mass Study Notes for 12-18-2022



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Before we turn to the first reading from Chapter 7 in Isaiah it's important for us to explain the personality of King Ahaz, the King of the Southern Tribe of Judah, about whom Isaiah will be speaking. Ahaz was son of King Jotham, the latter whom was a godly ruler of Judah. King Ahaz came into power when he was 20 years of age and he went bad immediately at the beginning of his reign. Second Chronicles provides an important insight into the personality of the King. "But he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel; he also made molten images for the Baals" (2 Chronicles 28:2). Not only was Ahaz an idolater who caused the circulation of idols to the god Baal, but he even burned his own children as sacrifices to false gods. The Scripture said, "But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and even made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had driven out from before the sons of Israel" (2 Kings 16:3). He went from bad to worse after the attack of the King of Assyria who had already overtaken the Northern Tribes.

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As if that wasn't bad enough, Ahaz then went on to block the entrance to the temple in order to prevent the true worship of God (2 Chronicles 28:25). King Ahaz started out bad and continued in his ungodly rule until the very end of his life without ever having a change of heart and repenting of his sin. It's with this understanding of the king that we turn to the text of the first reading from Isaiah.

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sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. Isaiah 7:10-14

The Lord gave King Ahaz the opportunity to trust in Him by asking for a sign. Instead of asking for a sign, King Ahaz spoke out of the pride and self-reliance of his heart, which displeased the Lord. God had given him an invitation and he refused to accept it. This "tried" the patience of the Lord, because he persisted in his independence and refused to trust in God's provision of a sign to assure him. God used this event of obstinate disobedience to foretell of Messiah. This prophecy was ultimately fulfilled through the birth of Jesus by the Virgin Mary.

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While many of us are already familiar with the narrative concerning the birth of Jesus, this passage highlights important truths for our lives. First, Saint Matthew brought out the fact that Jesus was born not through natural human relations, but through the supernatural working of the Holy Spirit.

This is important because since God is without sin this was the only means by which the sinless God-Man could come into the world. Second, since the virgin birth was a fulfillment of biblical prophecy, we can trust other prophecies that speak to areas of our life and ministry. This includes things like how the second coming of the Lord will play out, how the world will be eventually unified under Jesus' earthly reign. Third, Jesus was sent to save His people from their sins. This is God's special invitation to counteract the destructive nature of sin in order to stand before a Holy God and not be rejected at the judgment. This is not only "a" plan for salvation, it is "the" plan. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).

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Reflection Questions

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