

December 2023

The Lighthouse

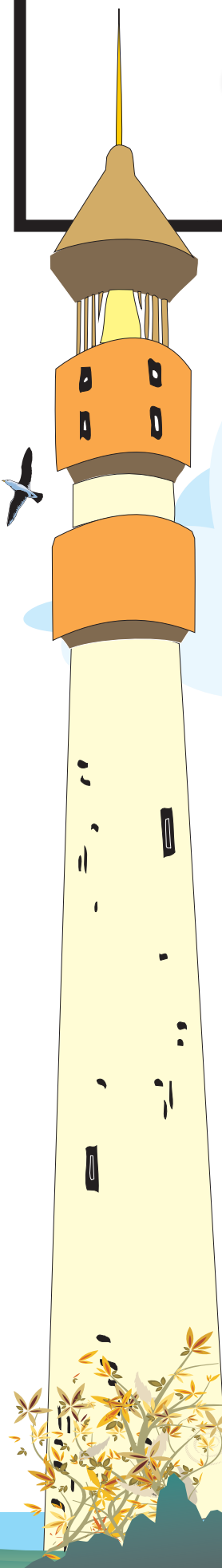
THE SIGN

Isaiah 7:¹ *In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it.* ² *When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.* ³ *And the LORD said to Isaiah, "Go out to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool on the highway to the Washer's Field.* ⁴ *And say to him, 'Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah.* ⁵ *Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying,* ⁶ *"Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it,"* ⁷ *thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass.* ⁸ *For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin. And within sixty-five years Ephraim will be shattered from being a people.* ⁹ *And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah. If you are not firm in faith, you will not be firm at all.' "* ¹⁰ *Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz,* ¹¹ *"Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven."* ¹² *But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test."* ¹³ *And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?"* ¹⁴ *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. **Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.***

At Christmas, you always hear Isaiah 7:14 quoted. However, few people know the context of that awesome sign.

Ahaz was the third of four kings under whose reign Isaiah prophesied. Whereas the first two, Uzziah and Jotham, were considered good kings who did what was right in the eyes of the LORD; Ahaz was a wicked king. 2 Chronicles 28 tells us that instead of walking in the ways of the Lord, he made metal images for the false gods of the day, he made offerings to false gods, even going so far as burning his sons as an offering to false gods.

Because of his abominable practices, the Lord God allowed Judah to be attacked by Syria and Israel. In this passage there are several names and places mentioned. You, of course have Ahaz, king of Judah. He was a descendant of King David. After David's son, King Solomon, died, the kingdom of Israel was split into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah. Judah's capital was Jerusalem and this was where Ahaz ruled and where Isaiah ministered. Because Ahaz was a descendant of David, Isaiah sometimes addresses him as "house of David."



Israel is the second nation in our text. In this passage the nation of Israel is sometimes referred to as Ephraim because Ephraim was the largest tribe of Israel. Israel was ruled by King Pekah, a usurper to the throne who murdered the previous king himself. Pekah was the next to last king of Israel. God doesn't think very highly of Pekah because he does not mention his name. You'll notice when the Lord speaks through Isaiah he refers to Pekah as "the son of Remaliah."

The third nation mentioned is Syria or Aram, whose capital was Damascus. The king of Syria was Rezin. He is the last king of Syria. They will also be conquered by the Assyrians (Syria and Assyria are two different nations).

Assyria, the fourth nation, is a rising power that will eventually conquer Israel and Syria and reduce Judah to basically a vassal state.

Rezin, king of Syria and Pekah king of Israel had made an alliance. Rezin convinced Pekah to join him against Judah. They threatened to replace Judah's King Ahaz with a puppet king, "the son of Tabeel" (Isa. 7:6). The prospect of these enemies coming against them caused the people of Judah to be very afraid. Hearing of the Syria-Israel alliance, Ahaz was so terrified, that verse 2 tells us that, *"the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind."*

For Ahaz and Judah, this is a national crisis. What is Ahaz to do? He was planning on calling on the Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727) to come to his aid and attack the Syria-Israel confederacy.

Verse 3 tells us the Lord instructed Isaiah to go with his son and meet up with Ahaz at one of the pools in Jerusalem. Here is the message he is to deliver: *"Be careful, be quiet, do not fear, and do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands, at the fierce anger of Rezin and Syria and the son of Remaliah."*

What kind words for a king who is in the habit of making images of false gods and worshipping them! But God is more kind. He goes on to call these two kings smoldering stumps of firebrands. A firebrand is a burning piece of wood or it can mean an inflammatory person. Either way, God says these two kings are like firebrands that are about to be extinguished. They have burned out. All they have left is a bit of smoldering.

It is a very positive report for Ahaz and should have comforted him. But God continues and lets Ahaz know through Isaiah that God knows exactly what these enemy kings are thinking, planning and saying, *"⁵Because Syria, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has devised evil against you, saying, ⁶Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves, and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it..."*

The best part of this is verse 7. Those two evil kings are saying one thing...*but the Lord God says this...* Those two kings can say what they want, but what matters at the end of the day is what the Lord God says; and this is what he says, *"It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass."*

There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it. What reassuring words for a king who "sacrificed and made offerings on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree" to false gods.

One would think that would be enough to reassure Ahaz, but God goes even further. Not only does he give his words of reassurance, but verse 11 tells us, *“Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.”*

Can you imagine God communicating to you a message of good news at a crisis point in your life? That would be great! But what if the Lord said, “Just to reassure you further, ask me for any sign you want – anything; anything in the entire universe that you can imagine. Ask me for a sign and I will give it to you in order to back up what I am saying to you. That would be incredible wouldn't it?

Sometimes when we look for guidance from God we consult the Bible. We pray. We look at the circumstances. We get advice from people we respect. Based on the wisdom derived from these sources, we make a decision. But I would bet that no one who has ever been at a crossroads in his/her life has ever been sent a messenger from God delivering a message of clear guidance and then had God back it up by giving you any sign of your choosing!

God is so gracious to Ahaz. Yet, does Ahaz believe God? No, he refuses to ask for a sign and is basically telling Isaiah, “I don't want to have anything to do with you or your God.” God responds to this insult by giving Ahaz a sign anyway. ¹⁴*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

According to John Calvin, Isaiah argues with Ahaz in this manner: “By rejecting the promise, thou wouldest endeavor to overturn the decree of God; but it shall remain inviolable, and thy treachery and ingratitude will not hinder God from being, continually the Deliverer of his people; for he will at length raise up his Messiah.”

And He did!!! The virgin conceived and bore a son – Immanuel, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! May we embrace in faith the sign God has given and not reject the deliverance of God through unbelief like Ahaz did. May this Christmas season see our faith in Christ strengthened.

Grace & Peace,

Tim

MINISTRY TO STATE NORTH CAROLINA

Ministering to Those Serving in Government

Darin Stone - State Capitol Minister

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What's Happening with MTS - North Carolina?

It has been another wonderful year with Ministry to State - North Carolina. Here are a few highlights over the past few months:

1. Ministry at the capitol has continued to be fruitful. I am grateful for the ministry of presence that God has established through MTS. God has been kind to provide opportunities to encourage believers in the Lord, pray with and for them, and to cultivate new relationships with an aim toward evangelism and discipleship. **Please pray that God will deepen relationships as I seek to connect with legislators working in their home districts this winter.**

2. Our entire MTS team had the privilege of retreating together in Pennsylvania last month for the purposes of relationship building, nurturing of our souls, and ministry training. It was a truly beneficial time to engage with the rest of our MTS team

who are all in the trenches of ministry to those who serve in government. **Please pray that God will work through our MTS team in various states and in Washington as we seek to reach the lost with the gospel and to disciple believers working in government positions.**



God's grace, he has provided some interest in MTS through that visit and interviews for a State Capitol Minister in Mississippi are starting to begin. **Please pray that God will establish a new state capitol ministry in South Carolina and Mississippi.**

4. I plan to be in Indianapolis this February to visit Central Indiana Presbytery (PCA) with the aim of seeking out a new State Capitol Minister for the state of Indiana. **Please pray for God to bring**



someone to us who will be called and equipped to minister in the Indiana State Capitol.

5. As the legislative session has ended for the winter, I will be turning my attention to the executive and judicial branches, seeking to cultivate more relationships and to develop ministry in those much more challenging environments. **Please pray that God would provide opportunities for the gospel amongst elected officials and their staff in those two branches of government.**



Support us in 2024!

This is the time of year when you are bombarded with petitions from church plants, ministries, and other wonderful organizations seeking financial support for the upcoming year. But may I be so bold as to ask you to prayerfully consider supporting me and my work with MTS - North Carolina for the upcoming year? God has been gracious to work in and through this ministry over the past six years to bring a gospel-presence to the North Carolina State Capitol. My prayer is that this ministry would flourish for many years to come. But it can only do so with God, working through his people, to resource this work with prayer and financial support. **Your support is vital to establishing and developing ministry amongst those who serve in government!**



If the Lord is compelling you to support MTS in 2024 with either a monthly, quarterly, or one-time gift, please [click here](#). I would be most grateful to have you join or continue as part of our prayer and support team in the coming year.

Words to Consider

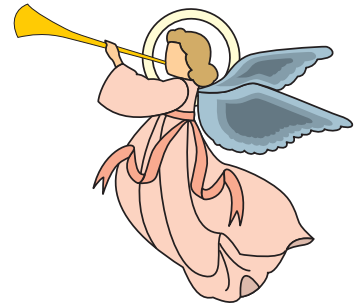
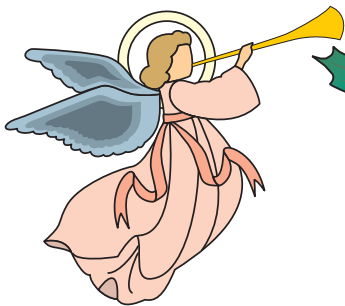
Nothing could be better for the world than those who are in power to join a good life to the art of political government. Such humble leaders attribute all their virtues, however many they may have on earth, to the grace of God who bestows them on those who pray for them. -- Augustine of Hippo (354 - 420 AD)

Shepherding List

<p>Aaron Smith/John Chaney Steve Vanderkooy</p>	<p>David Allen/Mike Clark Andy Bagby</p>
<p>Smith Family John Chaney Vanderkooy Family Nick & Kayla Clark Freeman Family Pizzari Family Carol Roch Margaret Fore/Tammy Turney Marilyn Kooienga Phil Pennington</p>	<p>David Allen Mike & Kim Clark Andy Bagby Norman & Fran Bagby Melba Sipriano Frank Genzer/Jimmy Lynn Spinks Jim & Elizabeth Mosely Kay Pringle Dandre Washington Glidewell Family Eloise Gryder Anky Delarie Shannon Philio</p>
<p>Regular Attenders</p>	<p>Regular Attenders</p>
<p>Dean & Lynne Rydbeck</p>	<p>Libby Jordan Maria Smith Victor Allen</p>
<p>Scott Malthaner/Ken Pennell Phil Harding</p>	<p>Ben Bowden/Jeff Harrison Steve Lustig</p>
<p>Scott Malthaner Ken & Pat Pennell Phil & Vielsa Harding Jim & Janet Misner Harvel & Megan Jackson Chuch & Ann Pringle Charlotte Rhett Rachel Roach Joan & Tricia Gauthier Harriett O'Malley Horn Family</p>	<p>Ben & Julia Bowden Diane Bowden Ken & Joan Gosnell Jeff & Katherine Harrison Nancy Marvar Tal Braddock Fran Handel Greg Mann Rosemary Bailey Steve & Michelle Lustig Kathleen Edwards Kayleigh Clark</p>
<p>Regular Attenders</p>	<p>Regular Attenders</p>
<p>Johnny & Maria Gonzalez Pat Shaw Barry Fancher</p>	<p>Glenn & Susan Collins Manuel & Ashley Diaz Family Sharon Parker</p>

Updated
June 29, 2023

BIRTHDAYS for DECEMBER



Greg Mann 1st.

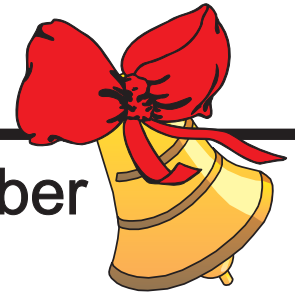
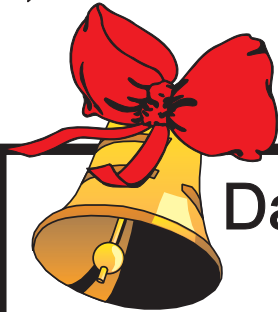
Melba Sipriano 3rd.

Phil Harding 5th.

Sharon Parker 24th.

Julia Bowden 26th.

Aaron VanderKooy 28th.



Dates to Remember for December

December 2 Men's Breakfast at 8:00am in the Fellowship Hall

December 2 Ladies join us for a Christmas Brunch, this Saturday at 10am to 12 noon at the church. Food will be provided by the Women's Leadership Team. We ask you to bring white socks and or toothbrush/toothpaste to give to the Seamen & Truckers Center in Gulfport for goodie bags for Christmas.

December 3 Communion

December 24 Please join us for a Christmas Eve Service at 5:00pm

There will not be a Sunday Luncheon in December



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First Presbyterian Church of Biloxi is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America. To learn more about the PCA, log on to pcanet.org

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Aaron Smith	601-214-0918	aaron.smith@firstpresbiloxi.org
Charles Pringle (Em.)	228-388-2517	charles.pringle@firstpresbiloxi.org
Tim Horn (Pastor)	662-313-8445	tim.horn@firstpresbiloxi.org
Shannon Philio (Assistant Pastor)	228-327-3875	shannon.philio@firstpresbiloxi.org

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Steve VanderKooy	228-990-1933	steve.vanderkooy@firstpresbilox.org

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Jeff Harrison	Music Director	jeff.harrison@firstpresbiloxi.org
Melba Sipriano	Pianist/Organist	melba.sipriano@firstpresbiloxi.org

Church Secretary

Kim Clark	228-374-6880	info@firstpresbiloxi.org
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