

SESSION

1

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY

WHEN HAVE YOU BEEN SURPRISED TO FIND OUT A "COINCIDENCE" WAS ACTUALLY PLANNED ALL ALONG?

THE POINT ➤

THE BIRTH OF JESUS WAS NO MERE CIRCUMSTANCE. IT WAS PLANNED BY GOD.

► ISAIAH 7:10-14; 9:6-7; 11:1-5

¹⁰Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz: ¹¹"Ask for a sign from the LORD your God—it can be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven." ¹²But Ahaz replied, "I will not ask. I will not test the LORD." ¹³Isaiah said, "Listen, house of David! Is it not enough for you to try the patience of men? Will you also try the patience of my God? ¹⁴Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.

⁶For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷The dominion will be vast, and its prosperity will never end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from now on and forever. The zeal of the LORD of Armies will accomplish this.

¹Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. ²The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, a Spirit of counsel and strength, a Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. ³His delight will be in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, he will not execute justice by what he hears with his ears, ⁴but he will judge the poor righteously and execute justice for the oppressed of the land. He will strike the land with a scepter from his mouth, and he will kill the wicked with a command from his lips. ⁵Righteousness will be a belt around his hips; faithfulness will be a belt around his waist.



ENGAGE (15 MINUTES)

THE POINT THE BIRTH OF JESUS WAS NO MERE CIRCUMSTANCE. IT WAS PLANNED BY GOD.

LEAD OPTION 1

Ask students to create two teams and separate them by large curtains or sheets to play a game of Human Battleship. Have each student pick a spot to stand in, while one designated player from each team throws a ball over the curtain trying to knock out some of the players. Say, **“It can be challenging to get through life without having a plan, but thankfully God had a plan for our salvation through Jesus.”**

LEAD OPTION 2

Put together a slideshow with pictures of different events from the Old Testament (Garden of Eden, the flood, Babel, etc.). Play the slideshow as students entered the room. Say, **“People have endured many different hardships and challenges throughout time because of sin, but God planned all along to bring Jesus as a Savior.”**

LEAD OPTION 3

Search the Internet for “Who Would Have Dreamed [Prepare Him Room Studio Sessions].” Play the video as you begin the session. Say, **“The prophets were able to tell of the coming of Jesus, because God had planned Jesus’ birth long before it occurred.”**

NOTE: Always make sure you preview any video clip you show students and ensure that it is appropriate for your church and ministry.



For **free online training** on how to lead a group visit **MinistryGrid.com/web/BibleStudiesForLife**
For **free Midweek Options** for your group, visit **lifeway.com/BSFLWin19fullpicture**

LEADER PACK ELEMENTS

If you have the optional Leader Pack, consider one of the following:

ITEM 1: Introduce students to the unit by displaying the *Unit 1 Full Picture of Christmas* poster.



THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

THE POINT THE BIRTH OF JESUS WAS NO MERE CIRCUMSTANCE. IT WAS PLANNED BY GOD.



THE SETTING

Isaiah served as a prophet in Judah during the reigns of four kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Though Uzziah's reign was prosperous and mostly peaceful, later kings witnessed the seeds of danger arising as Assyria as the nation grew stronger and more influential. Isaiah recognized that God's people had sinned and were facing judgment from God, just as the Northern Kingdom which had already fallen to Assyria in 722 BC. Isaiah preached that God would intervene and bring hope to His people.

FACT:

DRUMMING IS THE OLDEST MUSICAL ACTIVITY.¹ PEOPLE WOULD HIT JUST ABOUT ANYTHING TO MAKE A SOUND; THEN THEY REALIZED THEY COULD STRETCH ANIMAL SKINS TO CREATE INSTRUMENTS.

Stomp is an Off-Broadway show in which the performers create phenomenal percussion beats with all sorts of random items, including brooms, garbage cans, and lighters. The show, on top of the incredible music, also has its fair share of witty humor.

Recently, I took my 10-year-old son, who loves to play the drums, to see the show for his birthday. During one song, the crew was playing an intricate piece with match boxes when, all of a sudden, one performer's matches flew out of his box. The crowd howled with laughter, but my son gasped and asked worriedly, "Did he mean to do that?"

Some "coincidences" are not coincidences at all. They were planned in order to achieve a desired effect. The life and death of Jesus Christ may seem, on the surface, to have been the unanticipated and uncontrollable result of His going against the grain. However, the truth is the life and death of Jesus were no mere afterthoughts of God—He planned them all along! The Old Testament is full of prophecies that point to the coming of Jesus Christ.



IMPART

THE POINT THE BIRTH OF JESUS WAS NO MERE CIRCUMSTANCE. IT WAS PLANNED BY GOD.

ISAIAH 7:10-14

*Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz: "Ask for a sign from the LORD your God—it can be as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven." But Ahaz replied, "I will not ask. I will not test the LORD." Isaiah said, "Listen, house of David! Is it not enough for you to try the patience of men? Will you also try the patience of my God? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel. **ISAIAH 7:10-14***

Often when we have to make important decisions or answer some of life's biggest questions, we ask for a sign. Ahaz was a king whose country was under attack and his people were terrified (Isa. 7:1-2). God offered to give Ahaz a sign that He was powerful, but Ahaz already had his own plan and acted with false humility, refusing a sign from God. In reality, Ahaz may have been planning to ask Assyria for help, and therefore didn't think he needed God's help.

Upon hearing King Ahaz's refusal to ask for a sign, Isaiah the prophet took his message beyond the king. The nation of Israel as a whole had become unfaithful and had tested God's patience, but God had a sign for them: "See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel." Prophetic passages in Scripture can have multiple meanings:

- An immediate meaning for the initial hearers.
- An added meaning for future generations.

Verse 14 is the perfect example of this double meaning. Initially, the prophecy was a word of comfort and hope to the original recipients of the prophecy. It was not clear who the woman and child were, but perhaps it was a child born in the king's house, whose birth served to remind Israel that "God is with us." The second meaning involves a prediction of the future virgin birth of Christ. Matthew quoted this prophecy as he gave an account of Christ's birth (Matt. 1:23).

Historically, this phrase was intended to convince King Ahaz that God could rescue him from his enemies. Beyond that, this prophecy pointed to Jesus in order to encourage ancient Israel and inspire generations to come with the hope of the Messiah.

One phrase that stands out is "the virgin will conceive." In order to die for us, Jesus had to be one of us. He also had to be pure, but because of Adam's sin, anyone born of man inherits his sinful nature. Since Jesus was born to the virgin Mary with God as His Father, He's fully human, totally pure, and fit to redeem us. Truly, He is God with us!

Leader: Ask students about a time when they wanted a sign, or even how a sign may help them right now. Feel free to share your own story in order to get them started.

DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 6)

- 1** *Why is the virgin birth so important?*
- 2** *What are some ways God invites us to trust Him?*



IMPART

THE POINT THE BIRTH OF JESUS WAS NO MERE CIRCUMSTANCE. IT WAS PLANNED BY GOD.

ISAIAH 9:6-7

For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. The dominion will be vast, and its prosperity will never end. He will reign on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish and sustain it with justice and righteousness from now on and forever. The zeal of the LORD of Armies will accomplish this. **ISAIAH 9:6-7**

Isaiah spoke of a child who would be given to God's people and would bear the government on His shoulders. Generations before Isaiah wrote those words, God appointed Moses to rule over His people, and Moses found this was a great burden. The people continually complained and refused to live in obedience to God's law. Moses actually said, "They are too much for me. If you are going to treat me like this, please kill me right now ..." (Num. 11:14b-15a).

All people feel the weight of life's hardships, but nothing compares to the burden Jesus carried in order to redeem and reign over God's people. No one will govern Christ. Instead, He governs according to His power and wisdom.

VERSE 7: The Messiah is the rightful heir to David's throne and inherits the promises of the Davidic Covenant—God promised David that, through his heir, his throne would be established forever (2 Sam. 7:12-16; Matt. 1:1).

Isaiah used four terms to describe the Messiah.

- **Wonderful Counselor:** Since His name is wonderful, nothing is boring about His reign! As Counselor, He has the wisdom to rule effectively.
- **Mighty God:** Because Jesus is mighty, He has the power to execute His wise plans. He is the warrior who defeated sin and death.
- **Eternal Father:** The title "Eternal Father" could be interpreted as "Father of Eternity." This describes the Messiah's relationship to time—everlasting. For His people, Jesus will provide and protect for eternity.
- **Prince of Peace:** A prince is the son of a monarch, and Jesus is, of course, the Son of God. Though people experience conflict with one another and with God due to sin's curse, the Messiah brings peace by forgiving sins.

VERSE 6: These descriptions of Jesus stand in stark contrast to Ahaz's rule over God's people. Ahaz's counsel was founded upon worldly wisdom and not on faith in God. Ahaz wasn't a powerful warrior, but was weak and cowardly, and he led God's people to the brink of disaster. Perhaps worst of all, instead of leading the people to peace with God, He led them into idolatry—the opposite of peace.

DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 7)

- 3** *Why is it important for believers to understand that Jesus is God?*
- 4** *How have you seen Jesus reveal Himself as wonderful Counselor, mighty God, eternal Father, or Prince of peace?*
- 5** *Which of these names for Jesus is most meaningful to you right now?*



IMPART

THE POINT THE BIRTH OF JESUS WAS NO MERE CIRCUMSTANCE. IT WAS PLANNED BY GOD.

ISAIAH 11:1-5

*Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, a Spirit of counsel and strength, a Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight will be in the fear of the LORD. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, he will not execute justice by what he hears with his ears, but he will judge the poor righteously and execute justice for the oppressed of the land. He will strike the land with a scepter from his mouth, and he will kill the wicked with a command from his lips. Righteousness will be a belt around his hips; faithfulness will be a belt around his waist. **ISAIAH 11:1-5***

Initially, verse 1 doesn't sound like the Messiah comes from very strong stock. A shoot is just a twig, really; and of course, a stump implies that a dead tree has been cut down. Essentially, this verse teaches us the line of David was on its way out until the Messiah was born. The Assyrians had all but destroyed the kingdom of Judah, and then came the Babylonians who brought utter destruction to Jerusalem and the temple. David's dynasty appeared to be over.

Judah's dynasty was the tree that had been cut down. But from the stump, the Messiah would spring up as a fruitful shoot. Isaiah was allowed to see beyond his people's trials to the glorious kingdom that would be established when the Messiah—the tender shoot from a seemingly dead stump—would come to reign. Isaiah revealed to us significant characteristics of the Messiah.

- **He rules by the Spirit of the Lord:** The Spirit of the Lord came upon David when he was anointed king, and in the same way, God's Spirit would rest on the Messiah who would rule the world. The Holy Spirit would provide the Messiah with power and wisdom needed to carry out His calling.
- **He judges in righteousness:** Typically, a king depended on what he saw and heard, either himself or from advisors, to make choices in leading. The Messiah would not judge according to human senses and earthly wisdom, but would exercise supernatural perception to execute justice for the oppressed.

BELT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: When a man prepared for vigorous action, particularly battle, he tied up loose-fitting garments with a belt, which allowed his feet and legs to move freely. In a similar sense, the Messiah's righteousness is His preparation for accomplishing what the Father had for Him. Because He is sinless, He was fit to be our Savior.

We are called to pursue righteousness, striving daily to live in obedience to God. However, because we struggle with sin, we will always fall short. But everything Jesus does is right, true, and just. When we trust in Christ, by His grace, Jesus' righteousness becomes ours.

All people feel the weight of life's hardships, but nothing compares to the burden Jesus carried in order to redeem and reign over God's people. #BSFLfullpicture



DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE (P. 7)

- 6** *How do these verses help you understand the birth of Jesus was planned by God and not just a mere coincidence?*
- 7** *How do we see Jesus fulfilling this prophecy in the gospels?*
- 8** *What does this passage reveal about God's ultimate plan?*



LIVE IT OUT (10 MINUTES)

THE POINT THE BIRTH OF JESUS WAS NO MERE CIRCUMSTANCE. IT WAS PLANNED BY GOD.

► CHRIST

In Isaiah 7:14, we read that Jesus is *Immanuel*—*God with us*. Many people see God as some far off, impersonal God, but this is simply not the case. Though sin separated people—whom God designed to live in relationship with Him—from God, Jesus came to earth in order to be with us and to allow us to be with God.

9 How have you sensed Jesus' being with you recently?

10 How do you feel God calling you to be with Him in order to grow in your relationship with Him?

Write a brief prayer asking God to draw you nearer to Him.



LIVE IT OUT

THE POINT THE BIRTH OF JESUS WAS NO MERE CIRCUMSTANCE. IT WAS PLANNED BY GOD.

► COMMUNITY

Today, the body of Christ on earth is the church. We are called to be with Him by living in fellowship with our church family.

11 How are you engaging with Christ through the church? What benefits have you experienced through this?

12 How would God have you connect more meaningfully with your church in order to grow in your relationship with Him?



► CULTURE

Jesus came to earth when we were separated from God, and by His grace, we've been brought near to Him. However, all around us there are people who are still separated from God, and the responsibility to go to them has been passed down to Jesus' followers.

13 List two friends you know who are separated from God. How will you go to them this week to see them reconciled to God?