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ISAIAH'S PROPHECY



What's an event you start planning for way in advance?

The Bible Meets Life

When I took my sons to their first NBA game, it was between the Dallas Mavericks and one of the worst teams in the league. However, that night the Mavericks weren't doing well. Their coach, Don Nelson, was fed up with the mediocre efforts of his players, so when he disagreed with a call the referee made, he screamed at the referee. The referee gave Coach Nelson a technical foul, but he kept screaming. Nelson received his second technical foul and was kicked out of the game. In a post-game interview, a reporter asked him about the fouls. Smiling, he insinuated he did it on purpose to fire up his team. And it worked! The Mavericks won. Something that appeared "off the cuff" was actually planned all along!

Some "coincidences" aren't coincidence at all. They were planned. The life and death of Jesus Christ 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.

GROUP TIME

THE POINT: The birth of Jesus was no mere circumstance. It was _____
by _____.

If God came to one of us and said we could “ask for a sign”—any sign, even a sign “as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven” (Isaiah 7:11), I wonder what most of us would ask for? The Lord gave King Ahaz that opportunity, but he put forth a false humility and wouldn’t ask for a sign. Here was a king whose country was under attack and his people were terrified. (See Isaiah 7:1-2.) God offered to give Ahaz a sign to confirm that He was powerful enough to take care of their enemies.

Isaiah 7:10-14 ¹⁰ Then 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.” ¹² But Ahaz replied, “I will not ask. I will not test the LORD.” ¹³ 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? ¹⁴ Therefore, the LORD himself will give you a sign: See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel.”

God _____ a son would be born of a virgin and He would be named Immanuel.

Upon hearing King Ahaz’s refusal to ask for a sign, Isaiah the prophet broadened his audience beyond the king. He told the whole faithless house of David that God would give a sign anyway! The house of David’s wickedness had tested God’s long-suffering patience, but God had a sign for them: “See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel” (v. 14).

Isaiah 9:6-7 ⁶ 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. ⁷ 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.

God promised a child would be born who is the _____ .

Isaiah gave us more insight into Jesus, the coming Messiah. He did this by offering hope to those facing invasion by the Assyrians. They may have been facing dark times, but “a light has dawned” (v. 2). And this hope would come through a future king.

God With Us

Isaiah described Jesus using four names. Complete each sentence below with your responses to these titles. An example has been given.

Because He is the Wonderful Counselor, *I can trust His instruction and His Word.*

Because He is the Mighty God, I can _____.

Because He is the Eternal Father, I can _____.

Because He is the Prince of Peace, I can _____.

Isaiah 11:1-5 ¹ Then a shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. ² 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. ³ 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, ⁴ 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. ⁵ Righteousness will be a belt around his hips; faithfulness will be a belt around his waist.

God promised a descendant of David would judge with _____ .

Isaiah used powerful imagery in this passage to proclaim about the coming Messiah. At first glance, verse 1 doesn't sound like the Messiah comes from very strong stock: “A shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse.” A shoot was a small reed—just a twig—and of course, a stump implies that the dead tree had been cut down. Essentially, this verse teaches us that the line of David was on its way out until the Messiah was born. The Assyrians had all but destroyed the kingdom of Judah, but it was the Babylonians who brought Judah to an end in 587 BC. David's dynasty appeared as decimated as the Assyrian army at this point. Isaiah looked beyond his people's trials to the glorious kingdom that would be established when the Messiah—the tender shoot from a seemingly dead stump—came to reign.

LIVE IT OUT

The birth of Jesus was all part of God's plan for Him to bring us salvation and righteousness. How will you actively trust the sovereign plan of God this week? Consider the following suggestions.

- ▶ **Praise.** God has intricately planned the glorious act of salvation. Praise God for putting His perfect plan in place so long ago to bring salvation to you.
- ▶ **Give.** Many people live in areas where they've never heard the name of Jesus. Your church likely has a special offering at this time of year to help take the message of the Messiah to the nations. Give to this special missions offering as an investment in the lives of others.
- ▶ **Share.** Ask God for the opportunity to share the good news of the Messiah with someone this week. God will supply the wisdom, compassion, courage, and words if you will be sensitive and obedient to Him.



TALK IT OUT

Want to go a step further? Gather with two or three Christ-followers of the same gender. Read Isaiah 7:10-14, 9:6-7, 11:1-5, then use the following summary and questions for a deeper discussion.

In our American culture, Christmas has become more than a day; it's a season stretching from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day. Retail stores create Christmas displays and begin marketing as early as September. But God had the birth of Jesus on His mind from the beginning, and prophets like Isaiah predicted the birth of the Messiah hundreds of years before His birth.

What does this prophecy about the coming Messiah teach us about God?

Which description of Jesus in this passage is especially meaningful to you right now? Why?

What message of hope does this passage have for our culture today? What message of hope does this passage have for you personally?

DAILY STUDY

Day 1: God's message was one of comfort and hope: a Messiah would be born.

Read Isaiah 7:10-14.

Prophetic passages in Scripture can have multiple meanings: an immediate meaning for the initial hearers and an added meaning for future generations. This is true for Isaiah 7:14.

- ▶ It's not clear who the woman and child were, but perhaps it was a child born in the king's house. The birth of this child was a reminder of God's prophecy and the comfort that "God is with us" (Isaiah 8:10).
- ▶ The second meaning involves a prediction of the future virgin birth of Christ. Matthew quoted this prophecy word for word as he gave an account of Christ's birth. "See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated 'God is with us'" (Matthew 1:23).

Historically, Isaiah's words were intended to convince King Ahaz that God could rescue him from his enemies. Our sovereign God spoke something to encourage ancient Israel and inspire generations to come with the hope of the Messiah. Therefore, the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy was in Jesus Christ who is "God with us."

The Old Testament contains numerous prophecies detailing God's plans for the coming Messiah. Read Isaiah 53 for another description of Jesus.

"See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated 'God is with us.'"

— MATTHEW 1:23

Day 2: Jesus holds divine power and authority because He is the Son of God.

Read Isaiah 9:6a.

You may be familiar with the expression: “He looks like he has the weight of the world on his shoulders.” Many of us have known times when we felt as if we were carrying all the crippling burdens of the world. And if we hesitated to release those burdens to the care of God, trying to carry the load all alone only added to the heavy weight.

Any such burden, though, pales in comparison to the weight of government—ruling and watching over the people. “The government will be on his shoulders” (v. 6a). No one will govern Christ; instead He will carry the responsibility of governing. This statement implies that this child will be the royal son of King David, with rights to the Davidic throne.

This means we don’t have to carry the weight of the world on our shoulders anymore. It’s not God’s plan that we walk around burdened by the anxieties of life. Instead, Christ will take care of governing the world and ruling our lives. We can’t handle the weight and burden, but Christ can.

Identify one burden that has been weighing heavily on your mind and heart. In prayer, release this to the One who holds all power.



Day 3: Jesus reigns over all creation now and forever.

Read Isaiah 9:6b-7.

Isaiah used four terms to describe the coming Messiah's character and His actions.

- ▶ **Wonderful Counselor.** As Counselor, He will have the wisdom to rule effectively.
- ▶ **Mighty God.** The Messiah will have all the power to execute His wise plans. This term also emphasizes His divine power as a warrior. The Messiah will accomplish all the military exploits previously mentioned in Isaiah 9:3-5.
- ▶ **Eternal Father.** The Hebrew word could be rendered "Father of Eternity." In Hebrew, the word "father" carries the idea of "originator" or "source." The Messiah will be an enduring and eternal provider and protector.
- ▶ **Prince of Peace.** The Messiah will set people's warring hearts at rest by forgiving their sins.

Who do you know that needs to be encouraged by one of these descriptions? Be ready to share the truth found in these verses in your next conversation.

Day 4: God's Spirit enables and empowers Jesus.

Read Isaiah 11:1-4.

In these verses, Isaiah showed us two significant characteristics of the Messiah. First, He rules by the Spirit of the LORD. The Spirit of the LORD came upon David when he was anointed king. (Read 1 Samuel 16:13.) In the same way, God's Spirit would rest on the Messiah who would rule the world. God's Spirit would endow the Messiah with all the wisdom needed to carry out His calling. The Spirit imparted qualities of wisdom, understanding, and the fear of God to enable Him to rule effectively.

Second, He judges rightly. The Messiah wouldn't judge merely by what He would see and hear. These are typical ways for a king to gain information to help him lead, but the future Messiah would have supernatural means and perception to "execute justice for the oppressed" (v. 4). The coming Messiah would be unlike any other: He would judge with righteousness because He is God.

Take a minute to read aloud Isaiah 11:1-4. As you do, pay attention to the many phrases proclaiming Jesus' nature. In prayer, thank God for the ways you've witnessed Jesus' power in your own life.

Day 5: Because Christ is without sin, everything He does is righteous.

Read Isaiah 11:5.

When a man in biblical times prepared for vigorous action, he tied up his loose, flowing garments with a belt. The belt held everything in place; in a similar sense, the Messiah's righteousness holds all Messiah's other qualities in place. His righteousness means He is sinless, which is the main qualification for being our Savior. We can aim for righteousness and try to do the right thing, but we're marred by the struggle of sin. Christ's life and actions are held together by a belt of righteousness. Everything Christ does is right, true, and just.

In Isaiah's day the kings lacked upright character and stability, but the future ruler, Jesus, would provide what had been lacking. The reign of David's descendant would bring righteousness and faithfulness.

What does Isaiah 11:5 reveal about God's response to our sin? Write down a word or phrase that sums up your response in the space below.

"You know that he was revealed so that he might take away sins, and there is no sin in him!"

—1 JOHN 3:5

ISAIAH'S PROPHECY

Getting Started

DISCUSS: What's an event you start planning for way in advance?

RECAP (PAGE 7): When I took my sons to their first NBA game, it was between the Dallas Mavericks and one of the worst teams in the league. However, that night the Mavericks weren't doing well. Their coach, Don Nelson, was fed up with the mediocre efforts of his players, so when he disagreed with a call the referee made, he screamed at the referee. The referee gave Coach Nelson a technical foul, but he kept screaming. Nelson received his second technical foul and was kicked out of the game. In a post-game interview, a reporter asked him about the fouls. Smiling, he insinuated he did it on purpose to fire up his team. And it worked! The Mavericks won. Something that appeared "off the cuff" was actually planned all along!

Some "coincidences" aren't coincidence at all. They were planned. The life and death of Jesus Christ 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.

GUIDE: Direct attention to **The Point** on page 8. Invite group members to fill in the blanks. **THE POINT: The birth of Jesus was no mere circumstance. It was PLANNED by GOD.**

LEADER PACK: Display **Pack Item #1**, "The Full Picture of Christmas," and give a brief overview of the six sessions in this study.



Study the Bible

GIVE BIBLICAL CONTEXT: Isaiah served as a prophet in Judah during the reigns of four kings: Uzziah (783-742 BC), Jotham (742-735 BC), Ahaz (735-715 BC), and Hezekiah (716-686 BC). Though Uzziah's reign was prosperous and mostly peaceful, later kings witnessed the seeds of danger arising as Assyria, under the leadership of Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 BC), grew stronger and more influential. Isaiah recognized that the people of Judah 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.

RECAP (PAGE 8): If God came to one of us and said we could “ask for a sign”—any sign, even a sign “as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven” (Isaiah 7:11), I wonder what most of us would ask for? The Lord gave King Ahaz that opportunity, but he put forth a false humility and wouldn’t ask for a sign. Here was a king whose country was under attack and his people were terrified. (See Isaiah 7:1-2.) God offered to give Ahaz a sign to confirm that He was powerful enough to take care of their enemies.

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Isaiah 7:10-14 on page 8.

GUIDE: Direct your group’s attention to the following heading on page 8: **God PROMISED a son would be born of a virgin and He would be named Immanuel.**

RECAP (PAGE 8): Upon hearing King Ahaz’s refusal to ask for a sign, Isaiah the prophet broadened his audience beyond the king. He told the whole faithless house of David that God would give a sign anyway! The house of David’s wickedness had tested God’s long-suffering patience, but God had a sign for them: “See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel” (v. 14).

DIG DEEPER: Use the following commentary in your discussion of verses 10-14.

[VERSES 10-11]: Isaiah 7 takes place during the reign of Ahaz, who continually did evil in the sight of the Lord. (See 2 Kings 16:2.) The events occurred when two neighboring kingdoms joined together to attack Jerusalem. This resulted in great fear for Ahaz and the people of Judah. (See Isaiah 7:2.) Isaiah met with Ahaz and tried to comfort him (see vv. 3-4), but Ahaz turned to Assyria, a much greater threat than either of the smaller kingdoms. In verses 10-11, the Lord spoke again inviting Ahaz to ask for a sign He would be with the nation.

[VERSES 12-13]: Ahaz responded with false humility. He wouldn’t ask for a sign. Ahaz knew he didn’t need to test God as the Israelites in the desert had done, but was he really sincere or had he already decided to trust Assyria rather than God? Ahaz’s false humility prevented him from obeying the Lord. The problem wasn’t refusing a sign but Ahaz’s refusing the Lord.

[VERSE 14]: God would reveal His plan whether Ahaz was ready to receive that sign or not. The sign would begin with a virgin who would give birth to a son. In Matthew’s account of Jesus’ birth, the angel clearly cited His birth as fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. (See Matthew 1:23.) This special child would be Immanuel, meaning “God with us,” which would provide confirmation that God hadn’t abandoned His people.

DISCUSS: Immanuel means “God with us.” What does this truth mean for Christ-followers?

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Isaiah 9:6-7 on page 8.

GUIDE: Direct your group’s attention to the following heading on page 9: **God promised a child would be born who is the MIGHTY GOD.**

RECAP (PAGE 9): Isaiah gave us more insight into Jesus, the coming Messiah. He did this by offering hope to those facing invasion by the Assyrians. They may have been facing dark times, but “a light has dawned” (v. 2). And this hope would come through a future king.

DIG DEEPER: Use the following commentary in your discussion of verses 6-7.

[VERSE 6]: That this special child would be “born” is a clear reference to His humanity. Then, Isaiah emphasized the child would be born *for* us. He was sent for the people of God. The prophecy continued, “a son will be given to us.” While born by natural childbirth, He also was a gift of God. He was born and given.

The government would be on the shoulders of this child. Other kings had struggled to provide the peace and protection the nation desired. This child would provide lasting peace and lasting protection. This authority unfolded in four names. First, Isaiah called this child Wonderful Counselor. The emphasis with this name is the supernatural nature of His wisdom. Second, Isaiah called Him Mighty God. He would be God Himself. Though many people were associated with God, no other person had God’s name. Third, Isaiah called the child Eternal Father. No human ruler was spoken of as eternal, but Jesus would come as a child and establish the throne of David forever. Finally, Isaiah referred to the child as Prince of Peace. Through this child’s reign, God’s people would finally experience what they longed to have—freedom from their enemies and a sense of purpose.

[VERSE 7]: This verse emphasizes the work this child would perfectly accomplish. First, the child would have a dominion that Isaiah described as vast but His kingdom would be larger than one geopolitical country could contain. Second, the child would establish a kingdom where its “prosperity will never end.” This child would not only conquer the enemies of His people, but He would also make them whole. The emphasis of this kingdom would be to establish and sustain the qualities of justice and righteousness.

DO: Divide group members into subgroups of three or four people each. Invite subgroups to complete the activity, **God With Us**, on page 9, together.

God With Us: Isaiah described Jesus using four names. Complete each sentence below with your responses to these titles. An example has been given.

Because He is the Wonderful Counselor, *I can trust His instruction and His Word.*

Because He is the Mighty God, I can _____.

Because He is the Eternal Father, I can _____.

Because He is the Prince of Peace, I can _____.

DISCUSS: How have you seen Jesus reveal Himself as Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, or Prince of Peace?

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Isaiah 11:1-5 on page 9.

GUIDE: Direct your group's attention to the following heading on page 9: **God promised a descendant of David would judge with RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

RECAP (PAGE 9): Isaiah used powerful imagery in this passage to proclaim about the coming Messiah. At first glance, verse 1 doesn't sound like the Messiah comes from very strong stock: "A shoot will grow from the stump of Jesse." A shoot was a small reed—just a twig—and of course, a stump implies that the dead tree had been cut down. Essentially, this verse teaches us that the line of David was on its way out until the Messiah was born. The Assyrians had all but destroyed the kingdom of Judah, but it was the Babylonians who brought Judah to an end in 587 BC. David's dynasty appeared as decimated as the Assyrian army at this point. Isaiah looked beyond his people's trials to the glorious kingdom that would be established when the Messiah—the tender shoot from a seemingly dead stump—came to reign.

DIG DEEPER: Use the following commentary in your discussion of verses 1-5.

[VERSES 1-2]: In chapter 10, Isaiah spoke of how God would chop off the branches of the great trees of Assyria. (See Isaiah 10:33.) At some point, the tree of Jesse, who was the father of David, would experience a similar fate as only the stump remained. David's family line would be in apparent jeopardy. However, a shoot would grow from "the stump of Jesse." A branch would arise from the roots of the stump and bear fruit. Though God's people would face judgment and be cut down, He wasn't finished with them. A descendant of David would arise and have perfect access to the Spirit of the Lord. This included wisdom and understanding. His knowledge would be perfect, causing Him to make right judicial decisions. This ruler would have the power and might to carry out His decisions.

[VERSES 3-4]: Unlike previous rulers, this Davidic descendant wouldn't rule by "what he sees with his eyes" or "what he hears with his ears." His justice wouldn't be based on human observation and estimation but on the principles outlined by the Lord. Under His leadership, justice would come to several groups of people. Conversely, the wicked of the land would be slain by the "scepter from his mouth" and "a command from his lips." The wicked, who were apparently in positions of power to oppress others, would face judgment from this ruler of David's line.

[VERSE 5]: The reign of David's descendant would bring righteousness and faithfulness. David's future ruler would establish right morals and actions in the community of God's people. The term "faithfulness" is a reference to the stability of the reign of the Messiah. These two qualities would be like the belt that held one's clothing in place. In Isaiah's day the kings lacked righteousness and stability, but the future ruler, Jesus, would provide what had been lacking.

DISCUSS: What can we learn about Jesus' nature from these verses?

DISCUSS: What does this passage reveal about God's ultimate plan?

Live It Out

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, print different traffic signs and post them in your meeting space so they are visible to everyone. **Ask:** “What would driving be like if we didn’t have signs?” Allow time for responses. Then, explain that God gave a clear sign to Israel in Isaiah’s prophecies to guide them to the coming Messiah. God’s message of hope was also meant for us: Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, the Son of God. (Note: For a link to printer-ready traffic signs to use with this activity, go to BibleStudiesForLife.com/AdultExtra and click on today’s session.)

SAY: “The birth of Jesus was all part of God’s plan for Him to bring us salvation and righteousness. How will you actively trust the sovereign plan of God this week? Consider the following suggestions.”

GUIDE: Direct group members to review the three bulleted statements under **Live It Out** on page 10. Call on volunteers to share (1) which of these statements is something they want to pursue further, or (2) ways this study will transform their prayer life this week.

- ▶ **Praise.** God has intricately planned the glorious act of salvation. Praise God for putting His perfect plan in place so long ago to bring salvation to you.
- ▶ **Give.** Many people live in areas where they’ve never heard the name of Jesus. Your church likely has a special offering at this time of year to help take the message of the Messiah to the nations. Give to this special missions offering and invest in the lives of others.
- ▶ **Share.** Ask God for the opportunity to share the good news of the Messiah with someone this week. God will supply the wisdom, compassion, courage, and words if you will be sensitive and obedient to Him.

GUIDE: Invite each person to gather with two or three Christ-followers of the same gender this week for a deeper discussion, using **Talk It Out** (page 10) to guide their discussion. Encourage group members to spend time each day in God’s Word with the devotions found in the **Daily Study** section (pages 11-14).

PRAY: Close with a prayer of praise for God’s plan to send Jesus to be our Messiah. Thank God for this gift of Immanuel, God with us!



Free additional ideas for your group are available at

BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra