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THE SAVIOR IS COMING

We must begin our study with the promise of forgiveness because the whole point of Jesus coming to earth as a human was for the forgiveness of sins. The lifeblood of Jesus is the only atonement for sin that is acceptable to God. We'll really dive into this more during our lessons in Week Two, but we'll start with a prophecy in Isaiah 4 explaining the work of the Messiah. We'll start there because the need for atonement is the critical mission of the Messiah.

The chapters we will study this week (Isaiah 7–11) are sometimes referred to as “The Book of Immanuel.” We will be studying the virgin birth (chapter 7), the divine King (chapter 9), and the perfect ruler and His glorious reign (chapter 11).¹

One of the great debates about Jesus is whether He was just a man, a great teacher, a prophet, or the Messiah, the Savior for God's people. Many scoff and reject Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, because they reject the virgin birth of Jesus. “Impossible!” skeptics declare. “The girl, Mary, was lying, of course.” Interestingly, even some Christian scholars have begun to disagree about the importance of this prophecy.

The logical among us also may argue that the other prophecies about the birth-place and genealogy of Jesus could have applied to many other babies at that time.

WEEK ONE

What many of those people fail to take into account, however, is that through the prophecies of Isaiah, God was telling the people of Judah how He was going to keep a promise He made to King David. As you study this week, keep this promise from God to David in mind:

“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” (2 Sam. 7:12–16)

Wait, is this prophecy about Jesus or Solomon? Both! The promise of a ruler who would be from the line of David, whose throne would last forever, was a well-known vision the prophet Nathan delivered to David. The building of the house of the Lord was a “near” prophecy that David’s son, Solomon, would build the temple rather than David. You’ll have to get used to this idea of both “near” and “far” prophecies mixed together because Isaiah does this a lot. I want you to explore for yourself exactly what Isaiah said about the Savior and discover why it matters to you in this modern day. Let’s get started!



WEEK 1 | DAY 1

The Branch of the Lord

ISAIAH 4:2-6

Before you begin, ask God to give you eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to accept what He wants to teach you through the Scriptures today. Read the passage from Isaiah, looking for prophecies that could relate to the Messiah, His reign, or His kingdom. I recommend that you mark up your Bible as you do so. You might find it helpful to use colored pencils or highlighters to track themes or certain language. Take your time. Dig in!

READ ISAIAH 4:2-6.

“In that day” was a common phrase used by the prophets of Isaiah’s time to signal a day coming in the future. That’s really the only simple thing about this passage of Isaiah! There is so much to unpack, but we can do it. If you’re using the English Standard Version, you’ll notice that in verse 2, the “b” in branch is in lowercase. Interestingly, in the New American Standard and New International Version translations, the “b” in branch is capitalized so the phrase reads, “the Branch of the LORD.”

With this subtle alteration, does it change how you see this passage and what (or whom) is being predicted? Why or why not?

Isaiah was the first to use this term, “the Branch of the LORD” (*ṣemah*; YHWH), in the Old Testament.² The term was later used by Jeremiah (23:5; 33:15) and Zechariah (3:8; 6:12). Bible scholars, however, debate whether the term used, *ṣemah*, really refers to the Messiah. But even some Jewish sages have given the term messianic meaning.³ The literal word is, of course, “branch” as we understand it to be in terms of botany or regarding things that grow up from the ground. The primary argument that this phrase is *not* about the Messiah is because of the next phrase in that same sentence, “and fruit of the land.” Those scholars who do not place messianic meaning on Isaiah 4:2–6 believe this passage related to the bountiful blessings that would flow upon Israel when the people repented and turned to God.⁴

One argument supporting that this phrase is about the Messiah, however, is that the Aramaic Targum translated this phrase as “Messiah of the Lord,” “showing that the early Jewish interpreters thought this was a messianic reference.”⁵ (At some point Aramaic overshadowed Hebrew as the prominent language in the Jewish culture, so the Bible was translated from Hebrew to Aramaic for the “unlearned” Jews and was known as the Aramaic Targum.) Randall Price considered early traditions, later interpretations, the context and structure of Isaiah 4:2, along with other textual clues, and wrote that the connections “argue decisively for the messianic character of Isaiah 4:2.”⁶

So, if you first read the above passage and didn’t think it predicted anything about Jesus, you’re not alone! Some scholars would agree with you. Yet, after studying several commentaries about this passage, I think Dr. Price and other commentators are correct in the opinion that this passage points to Jesus and the work of the Messiah.⁷

Assuming “the Branch of the LORD” *is* referring to Jesus, then what does the rest of this passage mean? Write your thoughts:

Stick with me here, because the glorious part for you and me is coming up! Not only does “washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the blood-stains of Jerusalem from its midst” mean the forgiveness of sins “by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning” (the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross), but these verses promise the protection of the Lord for all time, for all things. The passage is filled with beautiful imagery the Jewish people would have held near and dear.

In these verses, the Jewish people would have recognized Isaiah’s references to the Shekinah glory of God that led them by cloud during the day and by fire at night during their wanderings in the desert. Also, the word Isaiah used for the canopy of protection, *huppâ*, likely refers to the marriage chamber set up for privacy for a bride and groom on their wedding night. The word he used for shelter would have been known to the Jewish people as the booths set up during the Feast of Tabernacles (also called the Feast of Booths or Sukkot) that had a water-drawing ceremony that symbolized the coming of the Holy Spirit with the Messiah.⁸ According to these verses, the Branch of the Lord has claimed you as His bride, and you will always be protected by the power of almighty God and guarded by the Holy Spirit—no matter what comes your way.

Have you ever felt this cherished and protected by God? Write about it here:

Now, read through the New Testament fulfillment of Isaiah 4:2–6 in Hebrews 10:1–14.

Did you notice how the old laws regarding sacrifice and sin were replaced with the single sacrifice of Christ?

Continue reading the next two verses (Heb. 10:15–16). In addition to the sacrifice of Christ, how is God going to give you that refuge and cleansing promised in Isaiah?

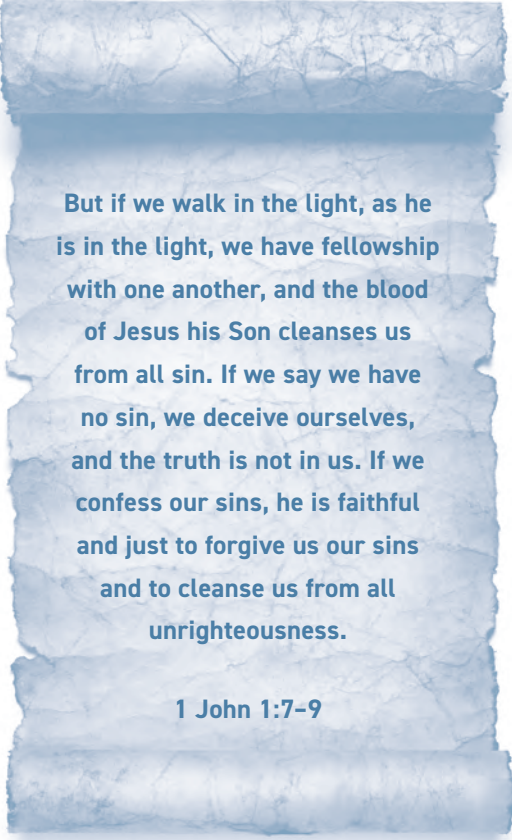
READ 1 JOHN 1:7–9 IN THE MARGIN. Circle “cleanse,” “forgive,” and “all.”

Because of the glorious “Branch of the LORD,” your sin stains were washed clean and then you were sealed with the best “stain guard” you can imagine—the power of God Himself—the Holy Spirit!

WHAT’S THE POINT?

As Christ followers, we should be basking in the glorious Branch of the Lord. Since the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross has already taken place, our lives should be set apart, protected from the outside influences of our times and culture. We belong in the beautiful shelter of the Most High.

List three areas of your life that are being influenced by things *not* associated with God, but rather by the temporary things of this world:



But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:7–9

People who come into contact with Christians should be able to sense the Shekinah glory of God that surrounds us.

Are the three areas you listed above causing the shine of God in your life to be dimmed? Why or why not?

HOW DO WE USE IT?

Consider that when Isaiah spoke the words in today's passage, the consequences of the Jewish people were still to come, looming in the future. If they believed Isaiah's words, terrible things were going to happen to them, their families, their friends, their city, and their nation. The Jewish people had to wait through anguish and destruction in hopes of getting to see the Messiah.

Yet, here we sit, comfortably in Bible study, safe and loved, in the arms of Jesus. The "beautiful and glorious" work of Jesus has already washed us clean, set up the marriage tent, and surrounded us with the power of God, no matter what comes our way. Use the promises of this fulfilled prophecy to change your attitude and your focus. Do your best to shift your thoughts and words from anything negative to the incredible positives in your life as a child of God.

List three negative thoughts or words that enter your mind the most:

Next, choose some of the words, phrases, and concepts we learned by studying today's passage (such as: beautiful, glorious, pride and honor, holy, my life is recorded

in heaven, washed, cleansed, surrounded by God, protected, sheltered) and write them over your negative thoughts or words.

This week, begin each day by remembering these awesome privileges and let them be your Shekinah glory to everyone who encounters you.



WEEK 1 | DAY 2

The Virgin Birth

ISAIAH 7:10–14

Begin with prayer for a revelation only God can give you. Read the passage from Isaiah, looking for prophecies that could relate to the Messiah, His reign, or His kingdom. Throughout this study, you should feel free to mark up your Bible as you read. You may find it helpful to use colored pencils or highlighters to track themes or certain language. Take your time. Dig in!

READ ISAIAH 7:10–14 IN YOUR BIBLE, MARKING AS ABOVE. Next, turn to Luke 1:26–35 and read about the angel Gabriel and the virgin named Mary. You can read Joseph’s side of the story in Matthew 1:18–25.

If only it were this easy: see the prophecy in the Old Testament, find its match in the New Testament, and call it “done”! Whether Jesus was born of a virgin or born in the normal course of men and women is at the heart of the debate about whether Jesus was really the promised Messiah. We must dig a bit deeper to uncover whether Jesus really was the Son of *God*. If you wonder, as I did in my youth, whether Jesus was just a man, clearly an amazing speaker, charismatic and compelling, but still just a man, then this is where we must start dealing with your doubts about Jesus.

Do you believe Jesus was born of a virgin?

Yes

Not Sure

No

If you circled Not Sure or No, write about your doubts:

Believing Jesus is the Son of God and that He was sent here by God to redeem humankind are two of the most important truths God wants you to understand from the Bible. Most of the New Testament is directed at these two points. For me, believing Mary gave birth to Jesus while still a virgin was critical to my putting *all* of my faith in Christ. My steadfast faith began by accepting that Jesus was born of a virgin and is the Son of God Himself.

Simply reading the passage in Isaiah and then the accounts in the gospels of Matthew and Luke, however, did not convince me before I was saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. I figured Mary and Joseph were Jews who would have read the book of Isaiah over and over again in their lives. Isaiah was written more than six hundred years before Jesus was born. I thought there was plenty of time for these folks to make up a lie to cover Mary's unexpected pregnancy. The stories of angels only increased my suspicion. It sounded like a fairy tale to me.

Yet, as a brand-new Christian, sitting outside one morning with the Bible in my hands, I asked the question all defense lawyers must ask about their cases and clients *inside* their heads (even if never spoken out loud): What if it's true? Could it be true? As the breeze blew across my face, I looked around our yard and saw hummingbirds zipping around, stopping briefly at my neighbor's feeder. That's when it struck me: What if it *is* true? How *could* it be true? Deep in my soul I felt a nudge, and heard the lyrics of a song in my head: "All of creation . . . sing[s] of His glory."⁹

“Well, creation is how it *could* be true,” I thought, “if God did create the entire universe and everything in it, those hummingbirds are pretty spectacular. I believe He did create men and women from the dust of this earth. So, I guess He *could* make Mary pregnant if He wanted to.”

To accept this idea, you have to believe God created the earth, the stars, animals, and men and women. If you don't believe God created everything around you, then the idea of Mary becoming pregnant without the help of Joseph will remain a fairy tale to you, impossible to believe. However, if you believe in God, consider this: If God can speak all life into existence, then why couldn't He form a child in Mary's womb?

List five things on earth or in the universe that “wow” you and point you to God as Creator:

If God created these things you listed and *all* the plants, oceans, stars, animals, humans, and so on, couldn't He decide to create a pregnancy in a young woman?

Now that we've tackled my logic, let's take a look at why this prophecy in Isaiah 7 has been called “the most controversial of messianic prophecies.”¹⁰ There are several things at play in this passage that lead critics to deny the virgin birth. First, the passage toggles back and forth, between prophecies that are near in time and far in time, and in the use of singular and plural words. Second, some scholars assert that the word Isaiah used that has been translated as “virgin” could also be translated as “young woman” or found to mean a pubescent girl. Let's take a closer look at Isaiah chapter 7.

In chapter 7, Isaiah was speaking to Ahaz, the wicked king of Judah. Ahaz and the people of Judah were terrified because armies (including its “sister” nation, Israel) were coming against them to replace King Ahaz with Tabeel's son as king (v. 6). Judah was special because it held the line of King David and represented the Davidic covenant. It was this “Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7:12–16; 1 Chron. 17:11–14) that

led to the expectation of a future Messiah who would be a descendant of David. Therefore, if Ahaz and the entire royal house were to be destroyed, it would bring an end to the messianic hope.”¹¹

So, the threat to Judah at the time Isaiah spoke these words to Ahaz supports an interpretation that this is a messianic prophecy. Through Isaiah, God was assuring His people that He would keep His word—that a future King would rule who came from the line of David (as Jesus does; see the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3:23–38). He’d already made the promise and He sent Isaiah to tell them how He would fulfill it.

How can you be assured that God will keep His promises?

Just before Isaiah made the virgin birth prediction, he described an army that was poised to usurp Ahaz as king of Judah; Ahaz the king and the people of Judah were terrified. God told Isaiah to take his own son with him to speak to Ahaz (by the way, that son of Isaiah had a name that means “a remnant shall return”) and tell Ahaz to calm down, stop fearing, and that the fall of Judah “shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass” (see Isa. 7:3–7).

Next, God told Ahaz, “If you will not believe, you surely shall not last” (v. 9 NASB). Because our almighty Father is so patient and filled with mercy, He told Ahaz that he could ask for a sign to destroy his unbelief. God even said to “let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven” (v. 11). In other words, Ahaz could ask for *anything* as a sign.

What did Ahaz do? He refused as if he was religious enough to be offended, when he clearly was not; he worshiped other gods and even sacrificed at least one of his children (see 2 Kings 16:3 and 2 Chron. 28:3). One commentator put it this way: “Pious though his words sound, Ahaz is doing the devil’s work of quoting Scripture for his own purposes and thereby displaying himself as the dogmatic unbeliever.”¹²

So there was God, trying to assuage the fears of His people, going so far as to offer this pathetic king *anything* in terms of a miraculous sign, and the man refused to ask! What happened next? Isaiah addressed the whole house of David and then spoke the prophecy regarding the virgin birth. The words used here shift from addressing Ahaz in the singular to the plural form meant to address all of Judah, the whole “house of David.”

The tension-packed scene, combined with God’s offer to produce a sign as deep as hell or as high as heaven, lends support to the interpretation that this is, in fact, a statement about the *virgin* birth of the Messiah. A miracle. Something never before seen on earth—or since. A sign as high as heaven. A divine pregnancy. God with us.

If God gave you permission to ask for a sign (*any sign*) from Him, what would you ask of Him? Why?

The next big “problem” with the passage is that upon first reading it can appear to mean that the sign would occur in a short time, not six hundred years later! However, this pattern of combining both a “near” and a “far” prophecy was common in Isaiah. Most scholars agree there was both a “long-term prophecy” and a “short-term prophecy” in this passage. For a thorough and very interesting discussion of these “near” and “far” prophecies, pick up *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy*, and you can study how Isaiah’s own sons were used as signs in the “near” prophecies and why Jesus was the “far” prophecy.¹³

Finally, one of the reasons this prophecy is so controversial is because, as we mentioned, the word Isaiah used for “virgin” could mean other things. Some critics claim the Hebrew word, “*alma* must mean ‘young woman’ and that *betula* is the technical word for ‘virgin’.”¹⁴ However, early pre-Christian translations (the Septuagint) translated *almah* or *alma* to the Greek word *parthenos*, which means virgin in the sense that we understand it today.¹⁵ In addition, a study of the use of these words throughout the Bible leads to a strong argument that using this word *alma* means virgin.

In every other situation where this word is used in the Bible, it either has a neutral meaning or it means virgin (not young woman). There is no place in your Bible where this same word was used to describe someone who was not a virgin.¹⁶

That's enough proof for me. How about you? Where are you now on the question at the beginning of today's lesson—do you believe in the virgin birth of Jesus? Is your answer the same or different now?

Next, let's deal quickly with the fact that Mary and Joseph did not call the baby "Immanuel" as the prophet Isaiah foretold. The name "Immanuel" in Hebrew means "God with us." Isaiah was pointing out that the child, who would be born of a virgin, was going to be God, walking and living among us . . . *with* us. Two chapters later, Isaiah also said our Savior would be born a child and called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6). These terms Isaiah used were describing who Jesus would be to us—His nature, not His literal name. Also, note that in Hebrew, Jesus is "Yeshua," which means "to deliver, to rescue."

What are some of your favorite names or attributes of God? List them here:

WHAT'S THE POINT?

How can a change in your thinking about whether Mary was a virgin or a teen caught in an early pregnancy impact your life today? It can change *everything!*

If Jesus was created in Mary's womb by God Himself, then Jesus really was who He claimed to be, and the Bible is true. Absolute truth.

When I was still wrestling with skepticism as a new believer, as I studied Isaiah, I came to the conclusion that whether I continued to put my faith in Jesus, or began to turn away from my newly found faith, hinged on this one point: Did I believe God created the heavens and earth?

Do you?

If yes, then you must admit everything else in the Bible *could* be true. What if it *is* true?! This outrageous thought fueled my Bible study for most of the next year in my faith journey. I kept studying because I truly believed there was a God, somewhere, who created the world I lived in every day. If *that* was true, then I had to submit my mind to the idea that these other outlandish and miraculous events described in my Bible are true as well.

Is anything holding you back from putting your full faith and confidence in the Bible?

How often do you use Scripture to guide your life? Would you like to use it more?

HOW DO WE USE IT?

The old Nike slogan comes to mind: Just Do It! Using the prophecy of the virgin birth in your life means setting aside human limits of reason. Putting your faith in Jesus as the Son of God Himself means putting your faith in the truth of Scripture. In order to use the power of Scripture in your life, you simply must get the content in your head so that it can impact your heart.

Do you enjoy reading your Bible? (It's okay to be honest!)

Yes

Sometimes

Not Really

No

If you answered Not Really or No, may I encourage you to explore other options? I often work with adults who do not enjoy reading. My husband does not read. He hates to read. He loves music, television, and movies. So he has to find other ways to get Scripture into his heart. You might need to try different things to get to a place where Scripture is accessible in your life. Scripture is available on audio, Christian content is accessible by radio, online, podcasts, and so on. It's totally okay (and this study might be very hard for you; I'll be praying for you; try getting a "study buddy" and take turns reading it out loud).



WEEK 1 | DAY 3

For to Us a Child Is Born

ISAIAH 9:1–11

Pray for discipline to keep going! Read the passage from Isaiah, looking for prophecies that could relate to the Messiah, His reign, or His kingdom. You may find it helpful to use colored pencils or highlighters to track themes or certain language. Take your time. Dig in!

READ AND MARK UP ISAIAH 9:1–11. Next, read Matthew 4:12–17 and see how Matthew ties this prophecy to Jesus.

While the virgin birth prophecy is known as one of the most controversial, Isaiah 9:6–7 is “one of the most famous passages in the entire book, [which] answers these hopes and dreams of the world, for it predicts a perfect ruler who will rule forever and ever over a prosperous and peaceful realm.”¹⁷

Isaiah continued in his theme of darkness into light in the opening of this chapter. In chapters 7 and 8, Isaiah predicted Judah’s destruction and doom. Here, he shifted to give them hope. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali were in the region of Galilee and were the hardest hit when Assyria invaded. This desolate land would be the first to see “the light,” first to experience joy such as in harvesttimes or military victory, first to experience “the yoke of his burden, and the staff for his

shoulder, the rod of his oppressor . . . broken as on the day of Midian” (Isa. 9:4), which was a great victory that the Jewish people knew came only from God.

Jesus began His public ministry in Galilee, and performed His first recorded miracle there, the wedding in Cana where He turned water into wine (John 2:1–11). Jesus began gathering His disciples in Galilee by the sea, and He began healing the sick there (Matt. 4:18–25)—so much so that “great crowds followed him from Galilee” (v. 25).

Which miracle that Jesus performed do you think gives the best proof that He is the Messiah? Explain why you picked that miracle as your best proof.

Which miracle touches your heart the most?

Isaiah 7 also continued to predict that a miraculous child would be born and would bring the glorious reign expected by the Jewish people and associated with the coming Messiah. “Expositors of all types (both critical and conservative) have connected the child in chap. 7 with the one in chap. 9.”¹⁸ This passage also “declared both the humanity (‘a Child is born’) and the deity (‘a Son is given’) of the Lord Jesus Christ.”¹⁹ Also, a child will be born “for” us and a child will be given “to” us.

You can see these same words used in Luke 2:11–12: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger,” and in John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Individuals who do not want to give this passage messianic meaning claim that Isaiah was describing King Hezekiah, and assert that Hezekiah simply didn't live up to these grand pronouncements. Others assert this prophecy is another one of Isaiah's "both" prophecies—there is one near (Hezekiah) and one far (Jesus) in this single prophecy passage. Most scholars, however, agree that Isaiah 9:1–7 is a messianic prophecy.

There is also some argument about the words "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Some assert this is the *Hebrew name* to be given the child. But the majority of Christian scholars claim these are descriptions referring to *the nature* of the child to be born.²⁰

What do you think? Do you think these words represent the name(s) of Jesus, or do you think these words are meant to describe the nature of the One who was to come? Did you notice that each one of these words has a human element *and* a divine or eternal element?

Let's jump in with the scholars and take a look at each of these these words.

Wonderful Counselor (pele' yoetz): the word *pele'* is most often used in the Bible to describe the miraculous acts of God. It is often used to describe the supernatural. It's not the "this dinner was *wonderful*" word. It's more "this is one of the seven *wonders* of the world" word. "Counselor" today usually means someone who gives advice, but *yoetz* means to serve as an advisor who leads and helps or has the power to execute wise plans. It is the use of the word, *pele'*, however, that asserts the deity of the child.²¹

Mighty God ('el gibbor): *El* is the common word for God in the Hebrew Bible. Immanuel is God with us. *El Shaddai* is God Almighty. *El olam* is God the eternal. The word *gibbor* means mighty and is also often used to reference God. The word can refer to a powerful warrior or valiant military hero. Some critics claim this phrase means that the child will be a godlike warrior for the nation. There is no debate, however, that the use of *El* is a reference to deity. It is Isaiah's use of this same phrase in chapter 10 that closes the debate for me. In just a few more sentences, Isaiah used this same combination (*el gibbor*) to describe God Himself: "A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the *mighty God*" (Isa. 10:21).²²

Everlasting Father (abi ad): it was common in Old Testament times for the king of a nation to call himself the “father” of the people in his country. The phrase used here, however, could be better translated as “the father of eternity.” Jews also considered the word *abi* to mean “originator” or “source.” One commentator stated, “If you want anything eternal, you must get it from Jesus Christ; He is the ‘Father of eternity.’”²³

Prince of Peace (sar shalom): just like the word “wonderful” used above, the word “peace” as we use it today is simply not enough to describe the true meaning of what Isaiah spoke. “The English word ‘peace’ only partially reflects the meaning of *shalom*. The word involves putting back together what had been divided. Thus it speaks of much more than merely the absence of hostilities.”²⁴

You may also recall that in the final words of Jesus before His crucifixion, and after His resurrection, Jesus spoke peace over the apostles (John 14; 20). In sum, Jesus came to earth as this child to offer peace between God and the human race, fixing what was broken.

We can conclude that the words themselves are the best argument for the conclusion that Isaiah was describing the nature of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

What do you most often call God when you pray? Do you use words like those above to describe Him? What are your favorite names for God?

WHAT'S THE POINT?

We simply cannot exaggerate anything about our God. It's impossible. He turns light into darkness. He is the Father of eternity. He is mighty. He brings peace. He counsels us. When we pause to ponder the absolute wonder of God, our minds

usually cannot keep up! He's too much. Too much of everything our minds can conjure up. Perfection and power. Holy and just. This is the child Isaiah spoke of. This is our Jesus!

What does this have to do with you? Go back to the last sentence in our passage today: "The *zeal* of the LORD of hosts will do this" (Isa. 9:7). Merriam-Webster defines zeal as "eagerness and ardent interest in pursuit of something; FERVOR."²⁵

God was *eager* to fulfill the Davidic covenant. God was *ardent* about keeping His promise that someday a ruler would come from David's family lineage whose kingdom would be everlasting. God has *fervor* when it comes to fulfilling His Word.

The Bible has a lot to say about you as a child of God. There are so many promises to you in the Word of God. I think He's just as eager to fulfill His promises to His children as He was to send the Messiah. I think God is zealous for you!

What do you think? Do you think God is zealous for you? Explain why or why not.

HOW DO WE USE IT?

We can use what we learned in today's lesson by doing two things: (1) never lose our sense of awe and wonder about God and Jesus, and (2) trust that God will keep His promises. Isaiah spoke the words you studied today more than six hundred years before Jesus was born. As we continue to study words that Isaiah spoke that came true, my prayer is that your trust in God will grow with each lesson.

Today, spend some time journaling about these two life applications:

How can I make sure my awe and wonder about God stays fresh?

In what area of my life do I need to develop more trust in God?



WEEK 1 | DAY 4

The Root of Jesse

ISAIAH 11:1–10

Praise God, because this is the last day of heavy study this week. I promise not all your homework will be this long! Read the passage from Isaiah, looking for prophecies that could relate to the Messiah, His reign, or His kingdom. You may find it helpful to use colored pencils or highlighters to track themes or certain language and mark up your Bible as you read. Take your time. He is worthy of the work!

READ AND MARK ISAIAH 11:1–10 IN YOUR BIBLE. Now, don't panic, but turn to Matthew 1 or Luke 3 and scan the genealogy of Christ. No need to memorize it, but just appreciate that both Matthew and Luke took the time to track the ancestry of Christ without the help of the internet to demonstrate how Jesus was born from the line of David.

Next, read Romans 15:8–9, 12 to see how the apostle Paul demonstrates how Christ fulfilled Isaiah 11.

Today we are studying the final prediction in Isaiah's three-part prophecy regarding the birth and reign of the Messiah. Isaiah told us of the virgin birth (Day Two), the divine King (Day Three), and in chapter 11, the awesome ruler who would fulfill the Davidic covenant and restore creation. In chapter 11, Isaiah was no longer

speaking of who was coming, but of *how* the Messiah will rule the earth. Isaiah was no longer waiting for the Messiah to come, but announcing His kingdom's glory!

Matthew, Luke, John, and Paul all wrote about Jesus and the fulfillment of Isaiah 11. You can read Matthew 3:16 and John 1:32 in the margin regarding how the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus.

In fact, Paul *specifically* stated that Christ became a servant “in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,” and linking Jesus as “the root of Jesse” and the statement “a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire” meant that salvation through Jesus should extend to the Gentiles (non-Jewish people). See Romans 15:8–12. I love what Paul wrote just after he linked the prophecies in Isaiah with Jesus:

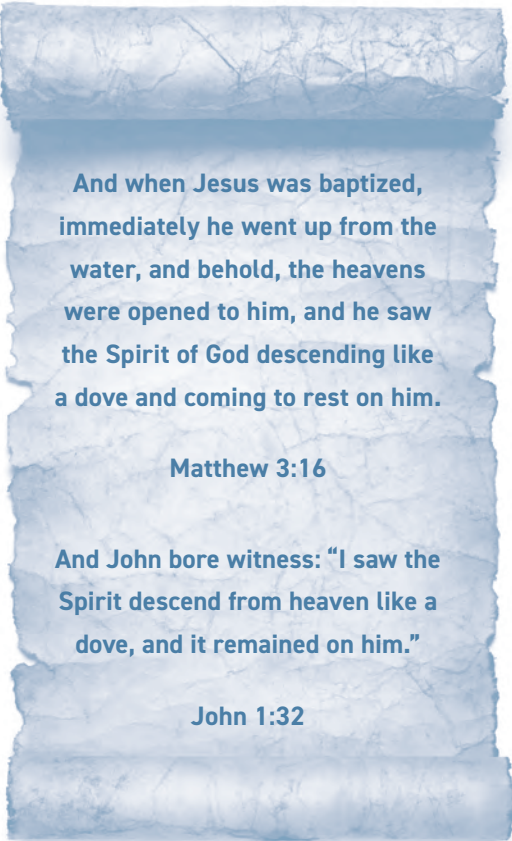
**May the God of hope fill you with all joy
and peace in believing,
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you
may abound in hope. (Rom. 15:13)**

On first reading, and in today's culture, these words “hope” and “joy” and “peace” take on little meaning. When linked with Scripture, and in context of what Paul was saying, I think “by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope” means that the “Spirit of the Lord” from Isaiah 11:2 *can and will* fill you with:

the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,

the Spirit of counsel and might,

the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.



**And when Jesus was baptized,
immediately he went up from the
water, and behold, the heavens
were opened to him, and he saw
the Spirit of God descending like
a dove and coming to rest on him.**

Matthew 3:16

**And John bore witness: “I saw the
Spirit descend from heaven like a
dove, and it remained on him.”**

John 1:32

And when that happens, when the Spirit of the Lord comes upon you with the gift of the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit that descended upon Jesus descends on you and verse 3 is the result: “And [her] delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.”

Please know that “fear” here means something like “reverence.” Sweet sister, hope can only “abound” in a life whose delight is in her reverence of the Lord God Almighty. Peace and joy only fill you when Jesus is your delight and the Holy Spirit has come upon you. It’s the only way.

On a scale of 1–10 (10 being high), where would you rate your “delight” in reverence for the Lord? Circle one:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Take a few minutes and brainstorm ideas for how you could increase your delight in the Lord:

How often do you think you experience wisdom, knowledge, counsel, and might from the Lord? Circle one (10 being often):

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The ups and downs of this life tend to make us forget the moments when the Lord intervened in our lives. For some reason, all of human history shows that people forget what God has done for them when times are good, but then go running back to Him when trouble hits, often forgetting how He delivered them in the past. Let’s try not to fall into that trap.

Journal about times in your life when God was clearly at work:

When Isaiah spoke the words in our passage today, he had just finished telling the people of Judah that they would be utterly destroyed, like a forest cut down and then burned. The dynasty of David would end. Just when it seemed all hope was lost, God reminded them who He is and that He would not forsake His promise. Thus, “a shoot from the stump of Jesse” would come. Commentators also suggest that this tiny “shoot” suggests the humble beginnings of Christ.²⁶

Isn't it just like our God to show up when all seemed lost? From something that was supposed to be dead, life would sprout!

What seems “dead” in your life right now? What “sprouts” would give you hope that God has not forsaken you and this area of your life?

I believe there is very little doubt among Christians that Isaiah 11:1–5 portrayed Jesus Christ. There is, however, some debate regarding verses 6–9 and whether these descriptions are literal or imagery to depict the totally new nature of the earth under the reign of the Messiah. There are also debates about whether these words describe the time of Christ, the future “Millennial Age” (when Christ will rule the earth for a thousand years; see Rev. 20:1–7), or the times of the new heaven and new earth (see Rev. 21:1–7). Perhaps this is another one of Isaiah's dual prophecies, one that will take place both in the Millennial Age and in the new

heaven and earth. Regardless of how you interpret these verses, no one disagrees that the fantastic times described represent a time when the curse of sin will be removed from mankind and creation.

Let's pause, however, on verse 9 for a moment because I think it may encourage someone reading this: "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9). Isaiah predicted that the earth would be filled with the "knowledge of the LORD" in a way that is huge and all-encompassing (as the waters cover the sea). Consider this:

The Hebrew language does not recognize any distinction between knowledge that is an accumulation of information and knowledge that is personal acquaintance. For the Hebrews, all true knowledge is based on experience. Therefore, when the prophet speaks here about "knowledge of the LORD," he is not speaking primarily of knowledge about the Lord but of insight into reality born of a close and intimate relationship with him. The Messiah will make it possible for all people to know God intimately (emphasis in original).²⁷

If your delight in the Lord is not as high as you'd like it to be, there's hope in Isaiah's prediction. Knowledge of the Lord comes from the Messiah—and He's already been here. You already believe in Him. Thus, you *can* know God intimately. I think this is one of Isaiah's dual prophecies. Both now and in the era of the new heaven and new earth, all people *can* know God intimately because the Messiah brought peace between His believers and God. This is both a "now" and "not yet" prophecy.

Finally, consider verse 10 as you ponder how the gospel has spread throughout the earth. Are the nations turning to the "root of Jesse"? Is Jesus a sign for all people? Do you think that Jesus' place seated at the right hand of the Father is glorious in heaven? My mind says "true," "true," and "true!"

For my fellow word "geeks," isn't it interesting that Isaiah switched the word from "shoot" to "root"? It becomes like the chicken or the egg conundrum. Which is it, a

shoot or the root? How can this prediction of a coming ruler be *both*? It can only be both if these verses reference Jesus. Remember, He is the Father of eternity (Isa. 9:6). He existed before the formation of the world (see John 1:1–5). Jesus can be both, the root of the line of David—in His deity—and the shoot rising from the stump of Jesse—in His human form, Jesus.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

Even when devastating things happen to us, God can bring up a shoot of life, something new and good, out of our dreadful circumstances. Even when it looks like God is far away from us or our problems, He is working behind the scenes to bring us into our future glory. This life is only temporary. Another time is coming. God has promised us, through the predictions in Isaiah, and others, that there *will* be a day when He will rule this earth again and everything will be beautiful and in harmony with Him.

Allow the prophecies of Christ to shift your focus away from yourself and your life to those suffering around you with no knowledge of the Messiah. Let this knowledge of fulfilled prophecy make you bold for Christ's sake. Tell others that God always keeps His promises! Trust Him with all your heart and soul and step out in faith.

HOW DO WE USE IT?

Keep these promises near the front of your mind. Focus on them each day. Let the Word of God renew your mind. Begin each day remembering that everything you see around you, *and* everyone you encounter, is under the curse of sin. However, then shift your heart to the new world that is coming to all who believe in Christ, the Messiah.

How can you point others to the “shoot of Jesse,” the Branch of the Lord? List at least three ways here:

Find three verses that encourage you to keep your mind focused on the eternal promises of God and list them here:

Spend time today meditating on these and be encouraged!



WEEK 1 | DAY 5

Review, Reflect, and Pray

Now that you've studied "the Book of Immanuel," do you think God kept what scholars call the Davidic covenant? Turn back to the beginning of Week One to read 2 Samuel 7:12–16 again.

Write whether you believe God kept His promise to David and why or why not:

Go back through the lessons and highlight the prophecies that had the most impact on you this week. Write the "address" of those prophecies here ("address" example: Isaiah 26:3):

Go back through the lessons and put a big question mark in the margin beside anything that you still have questions or doubts about, or where you want to learn more.

Write a prayer to God thanking Him for keeping His promises:



Week One: The Savior Is Coming

GROUP DISCUSSION OR REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Do you feel sheltered and protected by God? If yes, describe when and how. If not, explain why not.
2. Do you struggle to stay positive, shining the light of Jesus, throughout your day? If yes, what can you do to keep yourself from sliding into negativity?
3. Do you claim the Bible as true? Does it hold authority and guidance over your life?
4. What doubts do you have that the Bible is true?
5. Brainstorm some ideas for how to get more Scripture into your head and heart.
6. What's the most awe-inspiring thing God has ever done in your life?
7. Describe a time when you struggled to see God working in your life.
8. Share your favorite promise from God or one that is especially meaningful to you today.