



CHRISTMAS AT GRACE DEVOTIONAL

PROPHECIES OF JESUS' BIRTH // DECEMBER 5, 2021

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FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: Does your family have any Christmas traditions? If so, share them with the group.

Key Passage: *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."* (Isaiah 7:14)

Fulfilled Prophecy is Evidence That the Bible is Inspired by God.

One of our strongest reasons for believing that the Bible is inspired by God is the miraculous fulfillment of hundreds of Old Testament prophecies. In 2 Peter 1:19, the Apostle Peter wrote, *"And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart."* Notice that Peter is appealing to fulfilled prophecy as a witness to the truth and reliability of the Scriptures. Bible scholars tell us that nearly 30% of the entire Bible is predictive—that's nearly 2,000 verses! (Payne, J.B., *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, Baker Pub. Group, 1980, p.675). Nearly one-half of those prophecies have already been fulfilled! That is an astonishing number of prophecies—and fulfilled prophecies—especially compared to other so-called "holy books" such as the Koran and The Book of Mormon, which contain very few prophecies.

The reason the "holy books" of other religions don't have prophecies is because they were written by humans who can't accurately predict the future. So, rather than giving prophecies that could be proven wrong and thus lose all credibility, the human writers of the other books simply didn't make prophecies! In contrast, the Bible has hundreds of prophecies, many of which have already been accurately fulfilled, thereby giving evidence that the Bible is inspired by God.

The Bible itself gives the purpose of prophecy, *"Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose'"* (Isaiah 46:9-10).

The testimony of the Scriptures is that the purpose of prophecy is to let us know that God exists and that He has a plan for this world. By the foretelling of persons, places, and events hundreds of years before their occurrence, the Bible demonstrates knowledge of the future that is too specific to be labeled a lucky guess. By giving examples of fulfilled prophecy, the Scriptures give a strong testimony to their own divine inspiration.

Discuss: How does the fact that the Bible makes and fulfills such a staggering number of prophecies strengthen your confidence that the Bible is, indeed, inspired by God?

Discuss: Read Acts 3:18-26. This is an excerpt from Peter's sermon in Solomon's Porch of the Temple. Where do you see Peter emphasizing in the text the coming of Christ as fulfillment of prophecy? Why would this be important to Jewish hearers in particular?

Prophecies of Jesus' Birth

Jesus is the central theme of both the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament prophesies Him; the New Testament presents Him. After His resurrection from the dead, Jesus Himself referred two discouraged disciples to the Old Testament prophecies about Himself, including His birth: *"And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself"* (Luke 24:27).

Earlier, before His death and resurrection, Jesus had said to the Jewish religious leaders, *"For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me"* (John 5:46).

Philip told his friend, Nathanael, *"We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph"* (John 1:45).

The Apostle Paul wrote about the coming of Jesus Christ: *"which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scripture"* (Romans 1:2).

Christmas is a great time to review the prophecies made about Jesus' birth. Let's look at three of those prophecies:

- **Genesis 3:15** *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."* This prophecy is called the *protoevangelium*, which means "the first gospel" since it is the very first prophecy of Jesus' birth. This prophecy predicts Satan's ultimate demise *"he [Jesus] shall bruise your [Satan] head."* The context of Genesis 3 also describes the curse on humans because of Adam's sin and God's gracious provision of a Savior (Jesus) who would take the curse upon Himself.

Discuss: How does the reference to Jesus as the *"offspring"* of Eve (not of Adam!) in Genesis 3:15 point ahead to Jesus' virgin conception?

- **Isaiah 7:14** *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."*

Discuss: The name *"Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14) means "God with us." What does this name combined with John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-20 teach us about Jesus?

- **Micah 5:2** *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times."* This prophecy was fulfilled according to Matthew 2:1-12 and Luke 2:4-20. Although a small, humble village, Bethlehem plays a major role in several key biblical events (see "For Further Study" below).

Discuss: Why do you think God chose humble Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus?

For Further Study:

"What is the Importance of Bethlehem in the Bible?" article at www.gotquestions.org

"Ten Bible Verses That Prophecy Jesus' Birth" article at www.crosswalk.com