



# FORETOLD

THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS

GROWTH GROUP STUDY GUIDE



There is no more interesting or profitable study than to take the Old Testament statements concerning the coming life and sufferings of Jesus, and the New Testament containing the account of the earthly life, ministry and sufferings of Jesus, and note how perfectly the Christ life fits into the prediction of the prophets. There is no way to account for this except that we agree that the prophets were inspired and Christ was divine.

- The Messiah was to be born of a virgin
- He was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea
- He was to come out of Egypt
- He was to ride into Jerusalem on an ass' colt
- He was to be betrayed by His supposed friend
- He was to be sold for thirty pieces of silver
- The price paid for Him was to be given for the potters' field
- He was to be crucified among thieves
- His enemies were to cast lots for His vesture
- Not a bone of Him was to be broken
- They were to look upon Him whom they had pierced
- He was to be buried in the tomb of a rich man

All these things were prophesied long before Jesus Christ was born into the world. Every reader of the New Testament is aware that all of these predictions were literally fulfilled in all their details. There is no possible way to account for these prophecies and their fulfillment, unless we agree that the prophets who wrote them were inspired, and that Christ who fulfilled them is the Son of God.

Excerpts from Prophecies Fulfilled and Fulfilling  
by Henry Clay Morrison  
Asbury Theological Seminary

November 26, 2023

## Session 1 | The Greatest Gift

***Before you begin*** this Growth Group session, read the summary found inside the cover of your Growth Group materials and watch this video:

What Child Is This <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B10IqVg3S7M>



### Background:

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*



As we enter the season of Advent, we are preparing for Christmas and the birth of Jesus, but we shouldn't forget that the story of the Christ child's birth begins over 700 years before that blessed night in Bethlehem. It begins with Judah, God's chosen people being ruled by the wicked King Ahaz, and Judah is under attack by its neighboring countries. God sends the prophet Isaiah to tell Ahaz not to be afraid, for God will deliver His people from the hands of their enemies. Isaiah also tells Ahaz "Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights." (Isaiah 7:11). Ahaz refuses to bow before God and ask for a sign, and chooses to do things his own way. Now, these were God's chosen people, so He gave the sign anyway. Isaiah tells Ahaz "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."

(Isaiah 7:14). Immanuel means "God with us." Within 65 years, God destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel that was attacking Judah.

It took another 700 years for the prophecy foretold by Isaiah to be fulfilled with the birth of Jesus. Matthew 1:18-25 tells us that Mary became pregnant through the Holy Spirit. An angel appeared to Joseph and told him, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Isaiah tells us the babe is to be called Immanuel, describing who Jesus was (God with us), while Matthew tells us the babe is called Jesus, which describes what Jesus did (saved His people from their sins). As we celebrate Advent, let's remember to thank God for giving the world the greatest gift ever. Will you accept this precious gift?

*She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.*

Matthew 1:21

**Scripture:** Matthew 1:18-25

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passages aloud.*

## Sermon Reflection:

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?
2. What challenged you about this sermon?
3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

## Prophecy Foretold:

1. We read of wicked King Ahaz ruling over Judah in Isaiah 7:1-14. Ultimately, God gives him a sign that foretells of the son born to a virgin that we are to call Immanuel. How is God's faithfulness revealed in this text?
2. How does the story of King Ahaz receiving the sign of the virgin birth provide hope in times of fear and peril?
3. In Genesis 12:3, God tells Abram (Abraham): "*I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*" Does this passage relate to this week's sermon on the Greatest Gift? Explain.
4. In Isaiah 7:14, the prophet Isaiah tells King Ahaz "*Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel.*" Why are the words Isaiah said to Ahaz 2,700 years ago important to Christians today?

5. Why does the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 say He would be called Immanuel, but in Matthew 1:21 the angel tells Joseph to name Him Jesus?
  
6. Read Matthew 1:16. Who does this verse say was the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary? Why, then, in Matthew 1:20 does the angel say that Joseph was the son of David?
  
7. Read Matthew 1:22-23. What prophet spoke these words?
  
8. Why might God have chosen to use Joseph and Mary as the earthly parents of His Son? Does their choice surprise you? Why or why not?

### **Prophecy Fulfilled:**

1. In Matthew 1:20 the angel of the Lord tells Joseph that Mary's baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit? Why is this significant?
  
2. Isaiah tells us the babe is to be called Immanuel, describing who Jesus was (God with us), while Matthew tells us the babe is called Jesus, which describes what Jesus did (saved His people from their sins). How does this impact your spiritual growth?
  
3. Jeremiah 23:5, Isaiah 11:1 and 2 Samuel 7:16 tell of a King coming from the line of David (Judah). How was this fulfilled?



4. What do the words of the angel to Joseph in Matthew 1:20-21 tell us about the fulfillment of prophecy?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. According to gotquestions.org, Jesus fulfilled at least 300 prophecies in His earthly ministry. What, if anything, does this information mean to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Do you think that it is possible to not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus while upholding belief in His second coming? Why or why not?

**Resources:** *Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic*

Christmas: 25 Days of Peace (25 day reading plan) <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/22547-christmas-25-days-of-peace>

The Greatest Gift (7 day reading plan) <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/13276-the-greatest-gift>

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship – prayers, presence, gifts, witness, service?

## **Growth Challenge:**

This Christmas, make time each day to thank God for the gift of His Son to a hurting world.

# **NOTES**

December 3, 2023

## Session 2 | Humble Beginnings

***Before you begin*** this growth Group session, read the summary found inside the cover of your Growth Group materials and watch this video:

We Three Kings <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eEtUGgBwzEM>



### Background:

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*



When we read the Matthew passage, we are reading the account of events that had already occurred. When we read the Micah passage, we are reading prophecy of events that, at the time it was written, would not occur until centuries later. The Micah passage is just one of the scripture passages that point to the coming of the Messiah, God with Us, the Shepherd of Israel. At the time of the events in Matthew 2, the people of Israel had long been awaiting the coming of the promised Messiah. But there is an important twist to the narrative. As we read in Matthew 2:1-2, the people of Israel were not the only ones waiting and watching for the words of the prophets to come to pass. Why would others then, and now, care about the birth of the “king of the Jews”? Because Jesus did not come just to rescue and restore the

people of Israel. Jesus came to be the Savior of the World. Jesus was born to humble beginnings, and his birth was announced to the shepherds in the field so that they, and we, would know that Jesus came to be with us, where we are.

In this season of Advent, are you seeking the king of the Jews in the special places and times of the season, or are you seeking Him in your home, at school, at work? Are you seeking God with Us?

*“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”*

Matthew 2:2

**Scripture:** Micah 5:1-6 and Matthew 2:1-8

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passages aloud.*

### Sermon Reflection:

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?



2. What challenged you about this sermon?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

### **Prophecy Foretold:**

1. In Genesis 28:14, God tells Jacob; “*Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.*” Does this passage relate to this week’s sermon on Humble Beginnings? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What is the prophecy concerning Bethlehem found in this session’s scripture reading from Micah?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What did the words of Micah 5:2 mean to the Jews of the time of Jesus? What do they mean to us today?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How do you think that the wise men from the East knew about the “one who has been born king of the Jews”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. In Micah 5:1-6 we read that the people of God are under siege. God spoke to the people to ease their fears. What truths did He speak and how do these words help us as we deal with the uncertainties and fears we experience today?

6. The magi were described as wise men. In what were they knowledgeable according to Daniel 2:1-28?

## Prophecy Fulfilled:

1. What was the cosmic sign of Jesus' first coming? (Matthew 2)
2. Why do you think the Magi were interested in the prophecies of the birth of the king of the Jews?
3. What do you believe about the birth of Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy?
4. What did gold, frankincense and myrrh represent? How do you suppose they were used?
5. Matthew is the only gospel that tells us about the magi seeking Jesus. Why is it important that we know this part of the story?
6. When the magi arrived in Jerusalem, they were told that the king of the Jews they were seeking would be found in Bethlehem. Geographically, Jerusalem and Bethlehem are only 6 miles apart, and this news terrified King Herod. Yet, before the magi showed up on the scene, the people of Israel paid no attention to Jesus. Why is it that the people of Israel were indifferent to the birth of Jesus, and wise men from other lands were seeking Him?

7. The Magi reported to Herod that they had followed the sign of a star to find the newborn king of the Jews. In Luke 21:27 what does Jesus say the cosmic sign will be of His second coming?
8. For Christians, what is the hope that we anticipate with His second coming?

**Resources:** *Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic*

The Mystery of the Magi – 7 day reading plan

<https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/23289-the-mystery-of-the-magi>

Four Gifts of Christmas – 4 day reading plan

<https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/22283-four-gifts-of-christmas>

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship – prayers, presence, gifts, witness, service?

### Growth Challenge:

As you go through this week of Advent, make it a priority to look for indications of God with Us. Share your observations with a friend or your growth group.

# NOTES

December 10, 2023

## Session 3 | The Son of the Most High God

***Before you begin*** this Growth Group session, read the summary found inside the cover of your Growth Group materials and watch this video.

Breath of Heaven [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8\\_475FKJWQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8_475FKJWQ)

Amy Grant



### Background:

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*

It has been 400 years since God last spoke to His people, the Israelites, through the prophet Malachi, whose writings conclude the Old Testament.



For twenty generations, God has been silent, and His people have waited. While a remnant waited patiently, expectantly, for God to fulfill the prophecies foretold to their ancestors and passed down through the generations, many others stopped waiting.

*"no word from God will ever fail."  
Luke 1:37*

In Nazareth, a young, faithful, Israelite woman, named Mary—about fourteen or fifteen years of age—busies herself, while awaiting her upcoming marriage to her betrothed, a carpenter, named Joseph. Unbeknownst to Mary, the time has come for God to continue His story, and she is about to have an integral role. For, while God has been silent, He has also been watching, working, and waiting.

In the beginning, at the time of the fall of man, God promised the serpent the day was coming when the offspring of the woman would crush his head (Genesis 3:15). Through the prophet Isaiah, God gave a sign to King Ahaz, the king of Judah and the family line of David, a promise foretelling that a virgin would conceive and give birth to a son who would be called Immanuel—meaning God is with us (Isaiah 7:14). God would also speak through Isaiah to announce to the world that the gentiles would also receive the coming Savior (Isaiah 9:2), and that, in Him, the world would receive a Son who would rule in righteousness forever (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Everything is ready; the time is at hand. Mary has found favor with God, as has Joseph, who is from the family line of David. The angel Gabriel has appeared to Mary and blind-sided her with God's plan, one that completely derails any plans she may have had for her life. Yet, in complete faithfulness, Mary bravely tells Gabriel, *"I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled"* Luke 1:38. In his parting remark, the angel Gabriel reminds Mary, and us, of an important truth, *"no word from God will ever fail"* Luke 1:37. It never has, and it never will.

**Scripture:** Luke 1:26-38

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passages aloud.*

## Sermon Reflection:

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?
2. What challenged you about this sermon?
3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

## Prophecy Foretold:

1. Isaiah (7:14) prophesies that a pure young woman will give birth to God's son. Who is she?
2. In Luke 1:36, what sign did the angel give to Mary?
3. Read Luke 1:13-17. What has the angel of the Lord said about this baby? What role will he play in Jesus' ministry?
4. Were the words of the angel to Mary in Luke 1:29-33 prophecy? Why or why not?
5. Compare the words of the angel Gabriel in Luke 1:35 to the words of Isaiah in Isaiah 7:14. Do you consider that both passages refer to the same event? Explain.



6. In the prophecy found in Daniel 2:44, God makes a promise about the kingdom He will establish. (The angel Gabriel tells how this prophecy is fulfilled when he speaks to Mary in Luke 1:26). What is this promise and how does it make you feel about our God? How does it impact your willingness to serve Him?
  
7. Isaiah 9:7 also foretells of the never-ending kingdom that will be established, and the greatness of its government and its peace, established with justice and righteousness. This verse also tells us how this will be accomplished. How is this possible?
  
8. What is your understanding of the meaning of this quote from Luke 1:37, “*For no word from God will ever fail*”?

### **Prophecy Fulfilled:**

1. It has been said that as Christians, we read Old Testament prophecy with “post resurrection eyes”. What does this mean to you?
  
2. Luke writes about Jesus in 1:33, “*he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.*” What do you understand this to mean? (FYI—The genealogy of Jesus is recorded in Matthew 1.)
  
3. Why are genealogies—there are multiple recorded in both the Old and New Testaments—an enduring part of the Word of God? What do you think is their significance? What can we learn from these genealogies?
  
4. What was Mary’s final response to the angel’s message?

5. Why is Jesus called the Son of God? (Isaiah 7:14)
  
6. What does the angel Gabriel tell Mary about the baby she will bear (Luke 1:31-33)?
  
7. Luke 1:1-17 tells us that before the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, he appeared to Zechariah by the altar of incense, telling him that his wife Elizabeth would bear a son, who was to be named John, who would “*go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah*”. Do you see John as the fulfillment of words of Isaiah 40:3-5 prophesying someone who would “*prepare the way of the Lord*”? Explain your answer.
  
8. If God would have chosen you to bear the Christ child, and sent the angel Gabriel to you with the same message He gave to Mary, how would you have reacted? Is your faith strong enough to believe all that was told to Mary? Or if God would have chosen you to father the Christ child, and sent the angel to you (Matthew 1:20-23) with the same message He gave to Joseph, how would you have reacted?
  
9. Compare Daniel 7:13-14 with Luke 1:31-33. Do you see a connection between these two messages? Explain.

**Resources:** Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic.

Jesus: Joy of the Season, 5-day plan <http://bible.com/r/2oN>

Prophecy: Jesus & His Birth, 6-day plan <http://bible.com/r/2oR>

## Question for Discussion:

1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship - prayers, presence, gifts, witness, and service?

## Growth Challenge:

As the Advent season continues to unfold, and you feel God leading you to say or do something outside your comfort zone, remember Mary's brave, faithful answer to Gabriel, "*I am the Lord's servant.*" Do your best to respond similarly to any requests you receive from God.

# NOTES

December 17/24, 2023

## Session 4 | God's Generous, Extravagant, Extraordinary Love for Us

***Before you begin*** this Growth Group session, read the summary found inside the cover of your Growth Group materials and watch this video.

Amazing Love <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M7cD9kAjrXg>

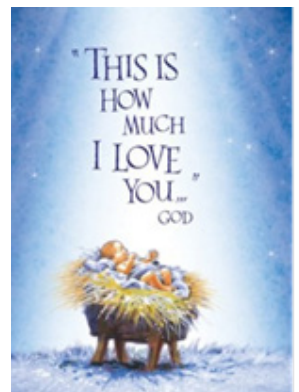


### Background:

*This will help set the context of the session if someone from your group reads this aloud.*

Most Sunday school children will know whose birthday we celebrate on December 25th. So, who is and was Jesus? Hebrews 1:1-4 says that we have a God who wants to personally communicate with us. In Numbers 12:6 the scripture says that he communicates in visions to the prophets. That is one reason that he sent His Son, not another prophet but His Son, his only Son. John 1:14 also tells of Jesus's dwelling among us. He was full of grace and truth just like His Father. He is the exact imprint of God. He is Creator; we are His inheritance, lovingly made in His image. He is our sustainer, He holds everything together, without Him things would fall apart. As our purifier, He died for human sins, our sins. Where is he? He sits at the right hand of God.

*In the past, God spoke to our ancestors many times and in many ways through the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken through his Son. . . .*  
Hebrews 1:1-2a



God loves you. In love He sent His Son to make the world right. He is ready to bring order into this chaotic world. He will not turn away or run. Welcome Lord Jesus.

**Scripture:** Hebrews 1:1-4

*Before engaging in the questions, have someone in your group read the Scripture passage aloud.*

### Sermon Reflection:

1. What was something you want to make sure you remember that came from the sermon this week?
2. What challenged you about this sermon?

3. What do you think Jesus is trying to teach you through this sermon? How will this affect your daily life?

### Prophecy Foretold:

1. What does it mean that Christ is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature?
2. What does it mean that Jesus upholds all things by the power of His word? (Hebrews 1:3)? See Genesis 1.
3. Hebrews 1:1 reads, “*in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways.*” Why do you suppose God chose to use prophets? Why are biblical prophecies significant?
4. What prophets can you think of that the author would be referring to? (Don’t forget the New Testament prophet that was prophesying about Jesus before Jesus was teaching?)
5. If we have already accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, is it still important for us to understand the prophecies of the Old Testament? Why?
6. The Law was specific regarding the requirement that offerings to the Lord be “without defect.” The writer of Hebrews states, “*After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*” Why was Jesus an acceptable offering for the “purification for sins”? (See 1 Peter 1:19)

## Prophecy Fulfilled:

1. Name three things that are descriptive of Christ, as described in Hebrews 1:3.
2. What are some reasons it's important for Christians to focus on the supremacy and glory of Jesus?
3. Hebrews 1:3 tells us that "*The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.*" What insights to Jesus does this verse give?
4. Hebrews 1:1 told us that God spoke to us in the past through the prophets. In Hebrews 1:2, the author says, "*in these last days he has spoken to us through his Son.*" To what or whom do you believe the author was referring? Through whom does God speak to us today? Read John 16:7. Does this change your answer?
5. What biblically foretold event have we as Christians been instructed to anticipate? Do you think about this? Should you?
6. The author of Hebrews is unknown. In fact, it is the only book in the New Testament that we don't know the author. Does it really matter who the author is? Why?
7. The book of Hebrews opens by pointing out Christ's divinity and authority. How should this impact our decision-making process? The author continues, identifying Christ's supremacy. How could this comfort someone going through a spiritual struggle?



8. Psalm 110:1 states. *“The Lord says to my lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”* Hebrews 1:3 (b) states: *After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.”* Do you see a connection between these passages? Explain.
  
9. As we wrap up this Foretold sermon series, what have you learned regarding the consistency of the message of the Bible?

**Resources:** Consider starting one of these Bible reading plans to go deeper on this topic

Praying the Names & Attributes of God: 30 day plan <https://www.navigators.org/resource/praying-names-attributes-god/>

Intimacy with God in The Secret Place- 7 day plan <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans/30250-intimacy-with-god-in-the-secret-place>

### Questions for Discussion:

1. What are you reading in the Word this week?
  
2. How is your reading growing you in the Marks of Discipleship - prayers, presence, gifts, witness, service?

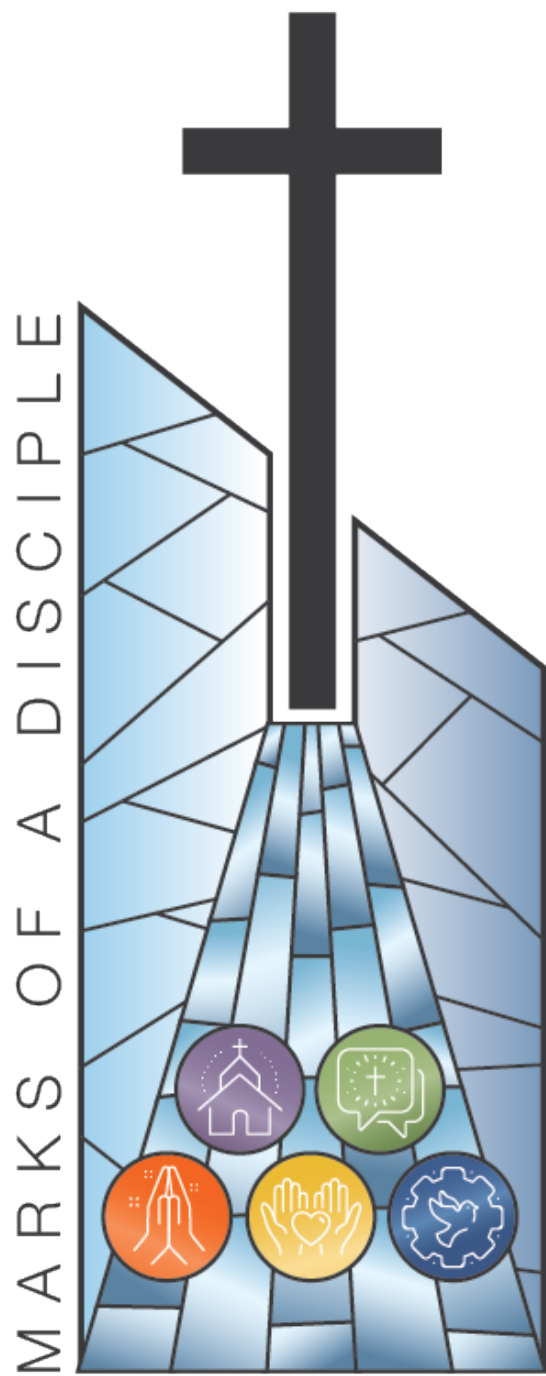
### Growth Challenge:

As you study God’s word this week reflect on Hebrews 1:1-4. Think about Jesus’ character. What are other character qualities of Jesus?

# NOTES



*Our Growth Group studies will resume on January 7, 2024 with our new series*  
**Winning the Battle Within.**



MARKS OF A DISCIPLE



[www.MarionMethodist.org](http://www.MarionMethodist.org)