

# THE HOPE OF THE AGES

Isaiah 7:14

**INTRO:** Please turn your Bibles, or turn them on, to the Old Testament book of Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 7. If you're new to church life, Isaiah is the 23rd book of the OT. There are 39 books total in the OT. Just before Isaiah, you have Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, The Song of Songs, and then ISAIAH. Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Ezekiel follow it.

Today starts the season of ADVENT, which will run through Christmas Eve. This word Advent means "coming" and refers to the coronation of a King. Traditionally it's a time for prayer, penitence and preparation to help believers slow down enough to savor the Savior's birth. Advent is meant to be a spiritual journey that helps us focus on the greatest gift ever given to mankind. During this time, we are called to worship the Word made flesh with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

Today I am preaching on THE HOPE OF THE AGES. Before we start our reading, let me give you a little backstory to the book of Isaiah...

- Isaiah has been called the "fifth gospel" because it is filled with so much good news.
- Isaiah was written about 700 to 750 years before the time of Christ, a fact that should cause us to wonder and worship as we contemplate how specifically these prophecies were fulfilled in the person of Jesus.
- This book contains some of the most beautiful language ever written and was quoted by Jesus extensively. Since Isaiah was one of His favorite books, then we should consider what it has to say as well. Isaiah is called a "major" prophet for two reasons. First, his book is one of the longest and second his message is very meaty.
- Some have pointed out that the 66 chapters in Isaiah serve as a "miniature" Bible, since there are 66 books in the Bible. The first 39 chapters correspond to the "law" of the Old Testament; while the final 27 correspond to the "liberty" taught in the New Testament.

While there are many themes to this wonderful book, I want to mention just three:

- ☒ God is in control.
- ☒ The Messiah is coming.
- ☒ God always has a remnant that stays committed to Him.

Isaiah's name means "Jehovah saves" and he ministered for more than fifty years during the reigns of four different kings. He was impacted greatly when the 10 tribes of the northern kingdom, referred to as Israel, was destroyed and its inhabitants were led into captivity. His ministry then shifted to the south, in the land of Judah, during a time of cultural corruption. Part of his mission was to warn the people that the same thing would happen to them unless they repented. His opening words begin with a declaration of moral culpability in Isaiah 1:4 "*Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt...*" and yet afterwards, he lovingly offered words of hope throughout the book.

Today, I want to quickly glance at 3 chapters in this great book, chapters 7, 9, and 53, with the hope of gaining insight into Isaiah's view of Christmas. NOTICE...

**I) A SURE SIGN:** Isaiah 7 In chapter 7, an evil king named Ahaz is on the throne of Judah. He had deliberately disobeyed God and as a result his kingdom came under attack from all quarters. Look at v 2 *“the hearts of Ahaz and his people trembled like trees in the forest shaken by the wind.”* Listen to me, if you don't know God, when trouble comes, you too will be shaken to the very core of your being. But instead of turning to the Lord, Ahaz begins to think about partnering with the evil empire of Assyria. At this crucial time, God in His great love and mercy toward the house of David, took the initiative and sent Isaiah the prophet to help King Ahaz.

Isaiah points out in v 9 that *“if you do not stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all.”* This is really a pun in Hebrew that can be translated like this: *“If there is no belief, you will find no relief.”* In vv 10-12 we read, *“Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, 11“Ask for a sign from the LORD your God...12 But Ahaz replied, ‘I will not ask; I will not test the LORD.’”*

This lights Isaiah up in v 13 *“Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also?”* Then we come to this remarkable prophetic passage in v 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.”* Let's notice a few things...

• **The Lord Himself will give the sign.** That's similar to what Abraham said in Genesis 22:8: *“God himself will provide the lamb.”*

• **The sign was given to all of us.** The word “you” in this passage is plural, indicating that it was not just a sign to Ahaz but to everyone as the angel made clear in Luke 2:10 *“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”*

• **The sign will be a son born to a virgin.** In the Hebrew, there is a grammatical interjection that should read, *“Behold, the virgin will be with child ...”* It's used to arrest attention, to indicate the importance of what is about to be said. This is no ordinary pregnancy and no ordinary birth. A virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son. This would certainly stand out as a miraculous sign.

• **The Son would be God incarnate.** The name Immanuel means, “The strong God with us.” While this was not Jesus' proper name, it was a name that belonged to Him as an attribute. This is who He is. From the point of this miraculous birth on, God would Himself be present among His people. This verse is quoted in Matthew 1:22-23 *“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’ – which means, ‘God with us.’”*

Did Ahaz understand all this? No. Was it fulfilled during his lifetime? No. It was a prophecy, focusing on the future, given to all people so that God could be with all people for all time to be a sure sign.

**II) A SENT SON:** Isaiah 9:6 *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*

The phrase “to us” means “for us, for our benefit” and the emphasis is on the child. The baby was given for our benefit. This verse sets forth the indescribable uniqueness of Jesus. Notice that both His humanity and deity is described in this verse. We see attributes of God and characteristics of man.

## I) A SURE SIGN: Isaiah 7

II) A SENT SON: Isaiah 9:6 CONTINUED *"For to us a child is born."* This describes his birth as a baby. *"To us a son is given."* Jesus is God's Son given as a gift.

The child was birthed in Bethlehem and the gift of the eternal Son is given to us. On top of that, the "government will be upon His shoulders." This means that all the expectations of the throne of King David are fulfilled in Christ (2 Samuel 7:13-16). The baby bundled in the straw holds the universe together. The one nestled on Mary's shoulders, bears everything on His shoulders. He is redeemer and ruler of all. Part of the reason we have been inoculated by the incarnation and even bored with the baby is because we focus only on the infant Jesus. He is far more than that as we see in his four-fold titles. The phrase, "and He will be called" means "He will justly bear this name..."

- *"Wonderful Counselor."* – He is Profound
- *"Mighty God."* – He is Powerful
- *"Everlasting Father."* – He is Personal
- *"Prince of Peace."* – He is Peaceful

It's amazing to me that Isaiah not only knew that Immanuel would be born to a virgin as a SURE SIGN; but he also understood that He would be the SENT SON. We're reminded of what Gabriel said to Mary in Luke 1:32 *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High."*

Notice lastly...

III) A SUFFERING SAVIOR: Isaiah 53 Jesus came, and through great suffering and ultimately sacrifice, He gave Himself as our substitute so we can now be saved from our sins. This purpose is stated from the very beginning of the Nativity account in Matthew 1:21 *"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."*

There is an amazing amount of pinpoint prophecies in Isaiah 53 that describe the substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross, but, I want to read just three verses. As I do, think with me about what Jesus bought for us, not on black Friday, but on Good Friday. Listen to Isaiah 53:3-5 *"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Like one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. 4 Surely He took on our infirmities and carried our sorrows; yet we considered Him stricken by God, struck down and afflicted. 5 But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."*

**CONCLUSION:** Jesus came, not only to be born in this world, but to be born in us. Are you ready right now to receive the Christ of Christmas? Isaiah's promises about Christ give us hope and when they're fulfilled in us they bring us peace. But like a present, Jesus must be received. I love the words in Isaiah 65:1-2 *"I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me...all day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations."*