

### 3 Prophecies For the Birth of Jesus, Part 2, Behold a Virgin Will Be With Child

Isaiah 7:14

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 19, 2021

Right now we're on a series called "Three Prophecies for the Birth of Christ". And if you would, open your Bibles with me to the book of Isaiah. We're looking at the book of Isaiah this morning because we are talking about the subject of prophecy and how Christ coming into the world was prophesied in advance. And if you would look at Isaiah seven with me, that's our passage for today. Isaiah chapter seven in verse one says this,

Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not conquer it. When it was reported to the house of David, saying, "The Arameans have camped in Ephraim," his heart and the hearts of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind.

And if you look down in verse 10, it says,

Then the Lord spoke again to Ahaz, saying, "Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; make it deep as Sheol or as high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask nor will I test the Lord!" Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it to slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken.

We will end the reading there. As you read that passage, some of it I'm sure sounds very familiar to you. If you've grown up in church, you've heard this quoted before, but some of it's not familiar. But to give you some background, the book of Isaiah falls into a section of the Old Testament that's known as the prophetic section. If you look at the outside of the Hebrew Bible, on the cover of it, it has the words, the Torah, or the law. That's the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, then "the writings," that's the books of Psalms and Proverbs. And then the last section is the prophets and that's where this book falls into; Isaiah is a book about prophecy. He tells you about the future. Now, to be fair, the prophets talked about more than that, as well. They talked about the present, too, and discuss the events that were occurring in their day, but a major focus of their ministry were the things that are to come, because these are the books given to Israel right before God sends him into exile. These are the warnings He gave them right before He banished them from the land, on account of their sin. And I told you last time, it was God's mercy that he gave them so many of them. It was God's kindness that he gave them prophet after prophet after prophet over a timespan of 400 years. If you think about it, you wouldn't have done that, would you? You would have told them one time and that's it. God told them over and over and over again.

There are 18 prophets that are mentioned in the in the Old Testament, or prophetic books. But there are far more that were sent to Israel and Isaiah was one of the first. If you look back in chapter one, verse one, this tells you a timeline for Isaiah. In Isaiah chapter one, the very first verse, it says, "The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amos, concerning Judah and Jerusalem, which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings

of Judah.” Those names may not be familiar to you either. But those are the kings that Isaiah prophesied under. And when you put them all together, it's a timespan of about 50 years. In other words, Isaiah prophesied for half a century; he did it for a very, very long time. Most pastors today, I think that the numbers say they last about four or five years in a church, and then they go somewhere else. Isaiah was ministering in Israel for 50 years. So he saw good and bad things come. He saw good kings, bad, evil kings. In fact, the name Isaiah is a spin-off of the word *Yeshua* or Joshua, because it means the LORD saves. And that's what this book is about. Isaiah tells you how the Lord saved His people in the midst of some very difficult times. Much like we're seeing today. And chapter seven gives you one of the worst of these times because it says, “Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah.” Now the significance to that is that Ahab was a bad king in Israel. He was a very rotten apple. His grandfather Uzziah was a very good king. But Ahaz was very different. The Old Testament tells us that he followed the Bales and he sacrificed his sons in the fire and he burned incense on the high places in the hills, and they're under every green tree, which means that he worshipped idols every chance that he got; he couldn't wait to chase after them. Which is why the Lord in chapter seven sends other kings against him in order to teach them a lesson, but it doesn't work.

If you look in verse 10 it says that the Lord spoke to him and said to ask for a sign. And Ahaz says that he won't ask for a sign, nor will he test the Lord. And that sounds nice when you first read it. But if you look on in the passage in verse 13, Isaiah rebukes him for it, because this is not a nice thing. He just didn't want to hear from God. He's not turning down the sign, he's turning down the Lord's Messenger. And as a result, Isaiah says, “It doesn't matter. God's going give you a sign anyway, and it looks like this: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear son, and she will call his name Emmanuel.” Now I will say a few words about this passage in a moment, because this is the prophecy we're going to look at, but the word “sign” here, it's the Hebrew word *owth*, which means a sign or an omen. But the way it's used here, it really means something that will change the way you look at God. Because that's what a sign does. A sign changes directions on you. So if you're going one way, it makes you go another way. And if you're going to the left, a sign makes you turn to the right. And in a similar sense, Isaiah says that the Lord will send a saviour to you who will be different from everything you've ever known about Him. This Saviour won't be like anything you've ever seen before in Israel, because he'll be born of a virgin.

And that's strange; virgins don't have children...I don't have to tell you that...and His name will be called Immanuel, which means God with us or God nearby because this child will be God Himself. And he will eat curds and honey, which means he'll be poor. This human being who will be God with us will grow up in a very humble life. But the point is that he'll do all this in order to save you. God will do all this in order to bring Israel back to Himself. And I told you last week when we studied this subject, that when you read a book like Isaiah, one thing that jumps out at you is how much it says about judgment, because God is so mad at His people in this book; He's so angry because they just keep sinning, they're failing Him over and over and over again. But at the same time, Isaiah says, even so God will not abandon His people; He won't leave them alone because He's going to send them someone like this in order to deal with their sin problem once and for all. The Jews couldn't do this. They did not have the power to defeat their sin. So in His grace and mercy, God decides to send someone to do it for them. And that is the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, as Gentiles, we often forget that the Messiah was a Jewish Messiah. And he came to save Jewish people. Now, we were grafted in later on; the book of Romans talks about that, but it was initially a Jewish thing. And that's what this is talking about. Just to show you how much the Bible mentions this, scholars have estimated that there are more than 300 prophecies about the Messiah and the Old Testament that are known as the Messianic

prophecies. When we were starting this series as an elder board, we had a hard time picking and choosing which ones to talk about, there's just so many of them. They cover everything from the timing of His birth to the manner of His death to the way He'll return to the earth. Some are so specific that they even talk about what tribe he would come from in Israel and who His ancestors would be in what town He would be born in. That's pretty specific. But all them were given for one reason, and that was to encourage the people of Israel; they were given because the Lord wanted to remind them of how much He cared.

One commentator said it like this, he said that when you read about the Messiah in the New Testament, you're studying a subject that's been talked about for 1000s of years. It's been prophesied about for ages, which can be confusing at first, because it's like you're stepping into something that's already underway. It's kind of like you're walking into a conversation at seven o'clock that started at noon. And so, in order to understand that, you have to go back to the beginning and get context. And that's what this is about. This is a conversation that's been going on for 1000s of years in the Bible. In fact, when you when you read this prophecy in chapter seven, you realize that one reason God gave it to Ahaz here of all people, this wicked king was because the Messiah was always on His mind. God was always thinking about saving His people, because He loved them so much, He just couldn't help Himself. And I mentioned this because you hear people say today that Christianity is just like every other religion in the world, right? They tell you, it's no different from all the other faiths that are out there. But it is because no other religion in the world can do this. They can't give you prophecy. Nobody ever talked about Muhammad before he was born. I don't say that to be disrespectful. It's just the fact. Nobody ever heard of him.

And I also mentioned this because you meet other people who say, well, they don't think God loves them very much. They don't think that He cares but the Bible says He does, because he cares enough to give you prophecy after prophecy after prophecy about the Saviour that was to come so that if you missed it the first time around, He sends it again. And then if you missed it with that guy, he gives you another prophet. Because God did all this in order to help you. Jay Vernon McGee writes this, he says, "I do not believe that one can have a full orb view of the Bible, or be a well-rounded student of Scripture without a knowledge of prophecy. The neglect of its study has produced harmful results. And one of the greatest ones has been the loss of encouragement that it brings to the church because who is not encouraged by prophecy? Who isn't helped by looking to the future when this world is bad? One thing that often helps us is to remember that there's a better world to come." Amen. I know we have people from a lot of different backgrounds in our church, but I bet if we took a survey some of you would probably admit you've never heard a sermon on prophecy before. You've never opened up your Bible to the Old Testament and seen what it says about the New, and as a result, you feel like you're missing something in the Christian life. Others you view have done this: you've looked into prophecy, but you have to admit you went to a church where they argued about it and that didn't do any good either, did it? It left a bad taste in your mouth. And if that's the case, I want to tell you this morning, that's not the way God intended it to be. He did not give you prophecy in order to fight over it. He gave it to you to encourage you. That's the whole point.

In fact, if you were to travel to Israel today and visit their national museum, you would see how encouraging the subject of prophecy is to the Jews even now, because they have a display there. That's known as the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit. Maybe some of you've heard of the Dead Sea Scrolls; it's a collection of fragments from the Old Testament that date back well before the time of Christ. And their story is so incredible, I just have to share it with you. But in 1947, right after World War Two, a Jewish shepherd boy was playing among some caves, just west of the Dead Sea when he threw a rock down a hole. This is like something from a movie, but it's a true story. He threw a rock down a hole, and he heard a tremendous crash, at which point he began to investigate. And he

discovered a cave that was full of clay jars with manuscripts inside them, just dozens of them scattered everywhere. So he went home and told his father and his father did what anybody would do, he decided to sell them to the highest bidder. He couldn't read. I mean, he didn't know what was on them. So he just started pawning them off to his neighbors until the authorities got involved. They confiscated them. And they found that these scrolls were copied from a group called the Essenes. They were Jewish monks living in the desert around the second century BC. And apparently they got in trouble and hid them while they're being chased by their enemies. They forgot to go back and get them. But this was called one of the greatest archaeological finds of the century, because they contain pages from almost every book of the Old Testament, including one entire copy of the book of Isaiah, written before the time of Christ, or copied before the time of Christ. And it said this, let me just quote some of the words in English. It said, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel." In other words, that was written down before Jesus was even born. You can go to Israel today and look at it in a display. I don't know about you, but that's the kind of thing that gets my blood pumping as a Christian, Amen? It gets me excited, you can see it. People that say, Well, this stuff was just written down, you know, years after Jesus was born, but now, you can go out and touch it and see it was written many years before. Because our faith is built on something greater, which is what we're going to talk about this morning by looking at three things to look forward to, in this prophecy.

So if you're taking notes this morning, that's our outline for today. We're going to study three things to look forward to in this passage from the book of Isaiah, because it was given to give you encouragement. I saw a post on Facebook recently that said, "Please stop saying things can't get worse than 2020. Because you're cursing us all. I keep getting worse and worse. So let's not talk about 2020 or 2021."

Let's talk about stuff to look forward to. In this prophecy, the first one is this: This virgin will be with child, which means that this child will not be born in a normal way because He will be born of a virgin. And if you would look back in verse 10, it says this. It says, "Then the Lord spoke to Ahaz saying, 'Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God, make it as deep as Sheol or as high as heaven.' But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord!' Then he said, 'Listen now O house of David, is it to slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear son.'" Now just to say a little bit about what you're reading here, the book of Isaiah has been called the fifth gospel, or the fifth evangelist, because it says so much about Jesus in here, in fact, Isaiah is quoted 66 times in the New Testament, more than any other Prophet because the New Testament writers understood this. And the reason he does that is because the people of Israel were a mess at this time in history. I mean, if they ever needed a Saviour, it was now. Verse one says there were a bunch of Kings coming after them. If you look in chapter seven, verse one, we've read this earlier, but it says, "Now it came about in the days of Ahaz, the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah, the son of Ramaliah, king of Israel, went up to Jerusalem to wage war." Now those names may not be familiar either, but the most important one is Pekah, the son of Remaliah, because if you remember this time in their history, the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms. You had Israel in the north, and you had Judah in the south. And the significance here is that the northern kingdom had joined forces with its neighbors to attack the south where Ahaz was. This is called Civil War, a very brutal situation. They were going to wipe him out, which would have devastated Ahaz. So to encourage him, Isaiah tells him in verse 14, "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child."

Now, what does that have to do with Ahaz? How does that encourage him? We'll get into that in a second. But to explain this, the word for "virgin" here, it's the Hebrew word *almah*, which refers to a young lady who's not been married before. Some have argued that the word does not have to mean virgin. And that's true, because the Hebrew language didn't have a word for that. It just referred to a single person. But if she was honorable the way this woman clearly was, she would have to be a virgin. There's no other way to explain it. So that's why the word is translated this way here. If you remember, when Joseph heard that Mary was pregnant, he wanted to what? He wanted to divorce her right. Why? Well, because Joseph was not an idiot. He knew where babies came from, and he thought Mary had been unfaithful. It was not until an angel appeared, and told him otherwise that he changed his mind. Then later on in the New Testament, John eight, says the Pharisees accused Mary of the same thing, because in John eight, they said Jesus was born in sin. And the word for sin there means sexual sin. They are accusing his mother of committing adultery as well. It's interesting, even as a grown man, Jesus couldn't shake that stigma. Something was fishy about this guy's birth, everybody knew it. And that's what I say is referring to here because he says that he Son of God will be born like that, He'll come into this world under a cloud of suspicion. It's not like his parents could go to everyone in Israel and say, no, no, you don't understand. This was a virgin birth, Mary did nothing wrong to me. No, I don't believe that. Who would believe that? Would you? And they couldn't go to their friends and family and say, what's not how it appears, we weren't doing anything sinful. The Lord did this. Oh, really? The Lord did this?! And that's the point here, that this child is going to be born under strange beginnings; He'll have an unusual birth.

But either way, I want you to notice a couple things here. The term Isaiah uses here is singular, implying that there's only one person he'll be talking about. Only one woman in all the earth. And it says she will bear a son, and that gives you the gender of the child. So it's not going to be a daughter, it will be a male baby. And it also says that the Lord Himself will do this, unlike the Roman Catholic Church teaches this has nothing to do with Mary and her special powers and that type of thing. This is all of God. And here's what it has to do with Ahaz. Going back to him, he was looking for a saviour when he wanted somebody to deliver him from his troubles. Because he's about to die here. Pretty soon it's going to be all over. So Isaiah says the Lord will provide that for you; He will give you a savior, but not in the way you'll expect. He'll send you someone to save you from your sin. And here's how He'll do it: He'll do it through a virgin birth. Because in order to save us, this is why the virgin birth is important. Our Savior had to be born without sin. You guys get that? That makes sense. He had to start his life without any blemishes whatsoever. So that's what he did.

And just explain that. I had a professor in seminary who was very strict in his grading. Because he gave us a quiz every day. And he graded on a four point scale. So if you got 100% he gave you a four. If you got a 90% he gave you a three. If you got an 80% he gave you a two. And if you got a 70% you got a one and then 69% or below you got a zero...goose egg. And it was the most frustrating thing to study and study and study for hours and hours and miss five questions on a quiz and get no points at all for your effort. The Bible says in regards to holiness, God is stricter than that. In regards to being perfect, His grading scale puts my professors to shame because to God if you score 99% on your personal holiness, you know what score you get. You get zero, nothing. If you get 99.99999% You get no points at all because God is Holy, He's perfect. And He expects you to be the same way if you want to go to heaven. And here's where Jesus comes in. This is why the virgin birth matters because it enabled him to do that. It allowed Jesus to have a perfect score every day of his life because He was born perfect, He died perfect, so that he deserved to go to heaven when He died. When Jesus' heart stopped beating and His lungs gave out, He earned the right to walk into the presence of God and stay there forever. But the Bible says that instead He traded places with you. On the cross, Jesus became your substitute. And the reason He could do it

is because of this doctrine: because He was born of a virgin; it all goes back to that. He could do this because He did not receive a sin nature from His father. He didn't receive Joseph's depravity because the Lord bypasses all that with His birth. Second Corinthians five, verse 21, says, "God made Him who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." Paul says Jesus had no sin; He was perfectly righteous. Therefore, He could trade places with you and become your righteousness, and save you.

To say it another way, Romans five says, "Therefore, just as through one man, Adam, sin entered the world and so death spread to all men, how much more has salvation come to all of us through the one man Jesus Christ." Now this is some deep stuff here. But the reason Paul compares Jesus and Adam is because Adam was created without sin to remember that he was created without any faults as well, but he sinned and pledged the whole human race innocent. Jesus also started life without sin, but He never did that. And as a result, He can save the entire human race. I had someone asked me, "Well, why is that? Couldn't there be another way?" Well, that's how God runs the world. When you get to heaven, you can ask Him. That's what He did. Some say it's not fair that Adam sinned, and we all fell with him. Well, it's not fair that Jesus didn't sin and He died on the cross. That's what God does. He shows us grace.

It's interesting when you study the history of the early church. One thing you find is that this is a subject that was talked about a lot in the early years, because the early Christians, they couldn't figure out how Jesus could be fully God and fully man, so they fought about it constantly. We fight about other things today, but they fought about this doctrine. And it was so bad that when Christianity was first legalized in the fourth century and allowed to meet out in the open, one of the first things they did was to hold a big meeting to address it called the Council of Nicea. It was the first major Council in church history since the one in Jerusalem in Acts 15. And the reason it took them so long to have a church council is because they were being persecuted. If you're being persecuted, you're not going to put all the Christians in one room and have a meeting. So it took several centuries. But at that meeting, the people came together to debate whether Jesus was one of two things: whether He was similar to God, or whether He was the same as God. The whole debate came down to one little Iota in Greek, one little letter. And here's what they decided: after several weeks of debate, they said we believe in one God the Father, this is a quote from the Council of Nicea. "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And then one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God the only begotten of the Father, that is from the very essence of the Father, God from God, Light of Light, very God from very God; begotten, not made. One in essence with the Father, by whom all things were made both things in heaven and things under the earth." I would have to say that's pretty clear and they didn't mince any words. The council decided that Jesus is the same as the Father; they decided that centuries ago. This doctrine meant so much to some of these guys, that one pastor named Athanasius was exiled five times over it. They say that you're not really worth your salt as a pastor unless you've been run out of town at least one time; this guy was run out five times, because before this council was held, and that was decided, he found himself arguing with his leaders over this doctrine, and they would throw him out of church and then realize that he's a good guy and bring them back and argue with him again and throw him out again. They even developed a slogan about this called Athanasius, Contra mundum, which means Athanasius against the world. He understood that this is where our salvation is found; it is found in the fact that Jesus Christ is God. If you take that out, you don't have anything, which is why we have to have the same passion for this today.

And that brings us to another thing to look forward to in this passage, and that is that this child's name will be called Immanuel. The first thing to look forward to is that the virgin will be with child. And not just any child, but a very unusual child, one that would shake and change the world. I looked it up this week. And I found that in

2020, there were 3.6 million babies born in the world. When you break that down, it comes about 10,000 births per day, 400 per hour and six per minute. That's a whole lot of babies. But there's going to be one that's going to stand out from all of that Isaiah says, because he will be born like this. That brings us to a second thing to look forward to in this prophecy and that is that the child's name will be called Immanuel, which means God with us, because that's what He has come to do. He's come to bring God and man together again. And if you read all of verse 14 again, it says this. It says, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name, Immanuel."

As you read on the text, you know, one important word is the word "behold." That's an unusual word because it was often used by a prophet to get your attention and kind of shake you up a little bit. If you remember, Ahaz is not really listening to Isaiah; he's becoming apathetic. So to rattle his cage, Isaiah says, "Behold, a virgin will be with child. She will call His name, Immanuel." The name Immanuel we're used to today with the center some of our songs at Christmas time. But it's an unusual word as well, because it only appears twice in the Bible: once here in Isaiah seven and again, in Isaiah chapter eight, is probably a word that Isaiah just invented himself, because nobody else uses it. But it's a compound word from *El* or God and *Manu* or with us, it means God with us or God nearby, which doesn't carry the same significance for us. Names back then were given to a child based on what was expected of them. My name Jeremy means lifted up by God, but my parents didn't name me that for that reason, they just liked the way it sounded probably like most of you. But back then names meant so much more. And Isaiah says this child will be called Immanuel, because that's what's expected of Him; He will bring Heaven down to earth. He'll restore the broken relationship that God had with His people. This is important because God was supposed to have a good relationship with Israel. And if you remember, that was the whole point of their sacrificial system, so that every time Israel sinned, they can make it up to God by giving a sacrifice and killing an animal, or going to the temple. But things had gotten so bad, it wasn't working anymore. So Isaiah says, God's going to do something greater than that. He's going to come down to earth. Try as hard as they might, Israel could not do what the law said; they couldn't keep it up. So God did the unthinkable. And He came to the earth on their behalf. Theologians have a term for this; they call it the divine exchange, where God exchange places with us. He sent his son to live and die in our place. They also call it the hypostatic union. The word hypostatic is a Greek word for being. And it means Jesus became God and man and one being in one distinct person so that He could deliver us from our sin. Some of you have seen that evangelistic pamphlet called the Bridge, which shows God on one side and man on the other. And there's an enormous gulf in between them, and in order to cross the gulf, Jesus comes and lays Himself across it. He's the bridge. That's the idea here. Jesus became the meeting place between heaven and earth.

You know, one pastor said, if I was going to save ants, I would become an ant, and preach to ants. And if I was going to save dogs, I would do the same because I would take on a dog nature and start barking the gospel to all who would hear. In the same way in order to save us, Jesus became a human being and he took on flesh so that He could reach us that way. Almost boggles the mind. Why would God do this? Would you do this if you were God? It's an extreme amount of grace and love that we can't even comprehend. It does several things for us as well me for one thing, it makes God approachable. It gives us access to Him. Because for centuries, the Jews didn't really have that; they didn't have a clear access to God because they couldn't keep the law. They're always breaking it. So their relationship with God was always hindered. No matter what they did, they couldn't enter the holy of holies in the room behind the veil; they were just too sinful for that. But now, because of what Jesus has done, the veil has been torn, and has been set aside, you can enter anytime you want. And it also makes God more knowable as well. It's taking away some of the terror that surrounded him, because to the Jews, God was always

up here and we're down here, he's always far away. And you don't really know what he's like. I couldn't put a face to the name. But now Jesus has changed that, because He told His disciples, He who has seen me has seen the Father. In other words, He who has looked at Christ has caught a firsthand glimpse of what God is like. You don't have to wonder anymore. Read the Gospels, and you know what God is like. But the point is that He did all this because He loved us. Jesus went through all this trouble and all this pain and all this agony. Because God didn't want to keep a distance from us anymore. I told you guys last week, there are days when I would like to keep a distance between me and myself. I don't like being around myself sometimes. It's not that way with God. God loves to be with you because He is Immanuel, God with us. That's it. That's His name.

I mentioned this because I don't know if everyone understands that you meet so many frightened Christians nowadays. They're so scared because they forget that God is with us. What do you have to be afraid of? They're afraid of viruses and those types of things. I understand that needs to be some caution, but God's bigger than a virus. You also meet other people who are who are scared because they go around feeling guilty all the time. Every time they sin, they say God is mad at me. He's going to get me, I have to try harder. But that's not the way it works either. Salvation is not about you trying harder. It's about God doing it all. God is not out to get you if you're a Christian, because He's forgiving it through the cross. And you have to remember that.

I was talking to a young man this past week who was pretty upset because he's going through a hard time. So I asked him, "How are you getting to heaven?" And he said, "Well, I don't think I should, because I'm not a good person." And then it was quiet. It's all he said. So I told him, "Well, you're right. I mean, you shouldn't go to heaven. The fact is that Jesus has come so you can, so you need to keep your eyes fixed on Him. That's how you get there. You don't get there by looking at yourself. It's been said that the reason salvation is free is because it costs God everything. And the reason it cost God Everything was so you can enjoy it, if you trust in Him, and call out to His name."

And that brings us to one more thing to talk about this morning. Just to review these other ones that the first thing to look forward to in this prophecy is that the virgin will be with child and then secondly, the child's name will be called Emanuel. Probably one of the strangest names ever given in the Bible. There's some really odd names in the Bible aren't there? I mean, you read through them, you can't pronounce some of them. This is one of the weirdest. A lot of people have called themselves great or magnificent, but very few have called themselves God. And yet, way back in the Old Testament, Isaiah says this in reference to Jesus. This is not taught just in the New Testament. As CS Lewis once said, "Jesus had to be one of three things. He was either a liar or a lunatic or the Son of God," but he couldn't have been anything else because nobody could have made these claims would have been a normal person. But He made these claims because He was God. That brings us to one more thing to look forward to in this text, and that is that the child will eat curds and honey. A third thing to look forward to in this prophecy is that the child will eat curds and honey, which means that he'll suffer. I don't know if you've ever eaten curds before, but it's a very suffering thing. He won't be born with a silver spoon in his mouth. It'll be just the opposite. And if you look in verse 14, it says, "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son and she will call His name Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey at the time He knows enough to refuse evil and choose good. For before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good, the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken."

I just told you that Isaiah prophesied over a long time, over about a 50 year period. But here Isaiah refers to something that will take place after he's gone after his time. And he says for before the boy will know enough to



refuse evil and choose good the land whose two kings you dread will be forsaken. In other words, before this Saviour will arrive and come to rescue you, your neighbor's land will be forsaken, the kings that you're afraid of are coming to attack you, because the nation of Judah will fall and you can read about that in the book of Second Kings, which would be terrifying to see. But Isaiah says even so, the Lord will send you a Savior. And this is how you can recognize him because he will eat curds and honey. Now, the word for curds here, by the way, the term Immanuel was a very lofty term. But this phrase, curds and honey, is a very humble one. Because the words for curds, it's the Hebrew word *kamma*, which means curds or cheese, or anything made out of fermented milk. The word honey means just what it says, because this was the food of a poor person at the time. It's the kind of thing the lower classes ate. If you remember, John the Baptist ate a very strange version of this because he ate locusts and wild honey. And I've told you before, you don't ever want to invite someone like that to the church potluck. But this person will eat curds and honey.

And just to give you some background on this, you know, historians tell us that the Jewish family typically began the day with an early snack. And then they had another snack somewhere around noon between their chores, but they didn't all sit down for a full meal until sunset when the work was done for the day, at which point they broke out their best stuff because they would pull out bread and wine and cheese. And they would eat fruits and vegetables and maybe some meat. If it was a very special occasion, they would sacrifice the fatted calf. But the poor people didn't have all that. They only had bread and milk and or old milk, stale milk. They didn't have refrigeration back then. So they would often drink milk that it may be gone bad to some extent. And that's what this child would eat, as it says, which is exactly what the New Testament tells us.

Because it says that Jesus was poor, he had nowhere to lay his head. In fact, the Bible tells us that he started life in the poorest place imaginable because he was born in a manger right next to the sheep and donkeys. I've seen a lot of young families have babies, I've never seen that before. That's very unusual. And yet, that's what Jesus' parents did, because there was no room for them in the inn. And it also tells us that when they gave birth to him, and presented him in the temple, they gave two young pigeons for Him. And that's interesting, because the law says that when a Jewish family had a child, they had to offer a sacrifice for them. And in order to do that, if the family was wealthy, they gave a sheep, some kind of large animal. But if the family was poor, they gave doves or pigeons. That's what Joseph and Mary gave the most important event in their entire life having this child and they couldn't give more than that, because they were strapped for cash. It's very touching. Later on, the Bible says they came into some money when the wise men visited Jesus, and they brought him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. But if you've ever wondered what happened to that, they had to spend it right away when they found out that Herod wanted to kill their baby, and they had to flee to Egypt and all the money went into the trip. They put all the gold into that journey. But the point is that they were poor. They didn't have much money. Which is why you know so little about Jesus early years, because he grew up just like everyone else. He had a very normal childhood. You read the gospels, and you kind of get a glimpse of when he was a young person in the temple. Remember that story, but that's about it. And I'm often wondering, what does a sinless teenager look like? It looks normal, I guess, whatever that would be. What was it like when He fought with his brothers and sisters?

There's several Apocryphal Tales that have come down to us that tell us that Jesus had a very interesting childhood and all these things have been debunked, but they are interesting. In the Gospel of Thomas, it says that he started walking straight out of the womb. As soon as he arrived, his feet hit the ground running, you know, his parents couldn't catch him. Which is kind of funny, because there's no way you would ever make it to Egypt with a child like that, you know, running around all the time, strap them to a camel or something, don't let them off.

And they also said that he made birds out of mud and raise people from the dead and he stretched two pieces of lumber so they could fit into a groove. I know we have some carpenters in the church. Some of you guys would like that gift to be able to stretch wood like that. But the Bible didn't say all that. It just tells us that his childhood was almost boring, or at least it was it was dull enough that they didn't write anything about it. Because the one who would be Immanuel or God with us, He grew up just like a typical kid. So that if you would have seen him in a room, you wouldn't know who He was. There was no halo over His head. There was no light shining down from the sky. The amazing thing is, God did all that for a purpose. And that was to show you that this is who Jesus came to save, He came to save normal people. This is who He came to rescue from their sin, ordinary sinners, like you and me. If you're special or wonderful or great, and all those kinds of things, well, that's not who He came to rescue. Jesus was born in poverty, that means he can help those who are poor in spirit. And if He was raised with nothing, it means He can save those with nothing. And that's what He did. You know, one common objection you hear from when you share the gospel with lost people, is that I can't be a Christian because I'm too ordinary. There's just nothing special about me. When you hear that you have to remind people, that's exactly why you can be saved. And Jesus came to rescue and save ordinary people. You also hear folks say, "Well, I can't be a Christian because I don't deserve it. I'm so unworthy." Well, that's okay, too. Because if you're unworthy, you're exactly where you need to be. God only saved those who were like that. You just need to be humble now and believe.

When this passage says in verse 15 that He will eat curds and honey, at the time he knows enough to refuse evil, and choose good. That means that Jesus will be poor, until the time when he's old enough to refuse evil and choose good and make moral decisions. In other words, he will stay poor the rest of his life. He'll be born in poverty, he'll die in poverty. You'll start that way, he'll end up that way. Even when the Roman soldiers took his robe. At the cross, he only had one robe, or one pair of clothes anyway, you have a bunch of them. But he did all this in order to remind you that this is a type of person he can relate to. One man named Gregory of naseous said this, he said Jesus began His ministry hungry, yet he is the bread of life. And he ended it thirst to get he is a living water. Jesus was weary, yet he is arrest, he was put to death yet he is our life. And he was sold for 30 pieces of silver, yet with his blood, He redeemed the world. And he did all of that in order to pay the price of your sins, which means you're never too far gone for Jesus. You're never too lost. For him to save. It's not possible. I don't know some of you may be wrestling with that today. Because you may be thinking, well, you don't know what I've done. Pastor Jeremy, it's really bad. And you're right. I don't know what you've done. But God does. And God says this, For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Amen. The word whosoever it means whosoever anybody. Because that's what Jesus has come to do. Some of you might also be saying, well, you don't know how poor I am. You don't know how little I have to bring to God. And you're right, I don't I have no idea. But that has nothing to do with it either. This is not about what you bring to the table. This is about what God brings. Salvation is not about how great you are and how high you can reach up to heaven. It's about how low heaven can reach down to Earth. You have to accept that today and let him save you. I think one reason why we have such a hard time doing this today is because we're all so successful nowadays. We're watching our economy grow and our town grow and our businesses grow. And we're making money hand over fist that we forget, none of that matters to Jesus, he doesn't care about your money, because he never had any of that. We're all richer than he was earthly speaking. But he did that to show you how to come to Him. If you want to receive all this, you just come empty handed. Put your money down, put your works down and come as you are. So will you do that today? I just mentioned to you guys the Dead Sea Scrolls and how they're sitting in Israel right now. But in my studies this week, I was reminded of another object that's found in one of their museums in Israel. It's a jacket that's made out of pages from the Old Testament is found in the Holocaust Museum over there. It's very sobering

thing. Because during the days of the Holocaust as a way to humiliate the Jews, a Nazi officer forced one of them to take a copy of the Bible and cut it up and make it into a coat that he could wear, which the tailor did but to get back in his guard. He only used the verses on judgment. The officer didn't know that he didn't read Hebrew. But it made him look ridiculous because he walked around the camp all day long with God's wrath hanging over him. I mentioned that story because that's a good illustration of where we're at spiritually and then recovered in judgment. You and I and every person on the planet is walking around with the wrath of God hanging over our heads, which is why God sent Jesus so we could exchange our coat for his so we could take our jacket Have wrath and hatred and judgment and replace it with his jacket of grace and mercy and forgiveness. But you can only have that if you believe in him and put your life in his hands. So will you do that this morning? Be a wonderful way to celebrate Christmas, let me pray that you would and that God would be glorified. And let's pray. Heavenly Father, we kind of put our hands over our mouth, and pause for a moment at the glories of what we've studied today. It's amazing that something so old so long ago in the Old Testament could talk about our Savior with such unmistakable clarity.

While we thank you, for these words of Isaiah often think what his life would have been like what he would have seen. But one thing he did see that was very clear as he saw savior. Well, that's what we have. And I pray for those who are here this morning. I know many of them I've trusted in Christ. Lord, thank You that You've given them that jacket of grace and mercy. But for those who are lost, and then they hear about all this, and it's just so confusing to them. Lord, I just pray that you would remind them and show them and what we've studied today, that salvation is so simple. It's not that hard. They just have a trust in the in the work of someone else, trust in your work and your grace and mercy. Through Christ, Lord, our world is going in a sad direction. It seems like things keep getting darker. But in the midst of the darkness, the light shines so bright from a passage like this. And it's a light that we all can see. Lord, when we walk out this morning, encouraged and built up and edified as a result of all this again, prophecy that the point of it's not to argue, the point of it is to see our Savior so clearly. Thank you for Christ. Lord, thank you to your God of mercy that talked about this so much. So we wouldn't miss it. Or would we glorify you and the remainder of our day as we take the Lord's Supper, it's very fitting, that we remember that our Savior went from the cradle to the cross. And He went from Bethlehem to Jerusalem and Golgotha where he was crucified, because that was the point of the whole thing. That little baby was born to die for the sins of the world. We thank you for such a great salvation would you be glorified as we celebrated today, we pray this in Jesus name. Amen.