

How does understanding that God waited hundreds of years to fulfill His promises about Jesus help us trust Him with the things we're currently waiting for in our own lives?

What does it mean that Jesus is called 'Emmanuel' (God with us), and how should this truth change the way we approach our daily struggles and celebrations?

The sermon mentions over 80 prophecies fulfilled by Jesus with odds more impossible than finding one marked coin in a state filled two feet deep with half dollars. How does this statistical impossibility strengthen or challenge your faith?

In what ways have distractions during the Christmas season caused you to move away from God, even though He hasn't moved away from you?

The first Advent candle represents hope as 'confident expectation' rather than wishful thinking. What promises of God are you holding onto with confident expectation right now?

How does the prophecy in Genesis 3:15 about Satan bruising Jesus's heel while Jesus crushes Satan's head help us understand both the cost and the victory of the cross?

Why do you think God chose to have Jesus born in the small, insignificant town of Bethlehem rather than in a place of power and prestige?

The sermon states that Jesus came to make everything wrong in this world right. What specific 'wrongs' in your life or community are you trusting Jesus to make right?

How can we as families use the Advent season to slow down and prepare our hearts, rather than getting caught up in the exhausting and expensive expectations of Christmas?

If God fulfilled every prophecy about Jesus's first coming, what does that tell us about His promise to return again, and how should we live differently because of that certainty?

Small Group Guide: Advent - The Promise of Hope

Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by thanking God for His faithfulness and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open hearts to His truth.

Icebreaker

- What is your favorite Christmas tradition, and why is it meaningful to you?
- Share one thing you're waiting for or hoping for this Christmas season.

Key Themes from the Sermon

1. **The Meaning of Advent**

Advent means "coming" or "waiting" - a season to prepare our hearts for both celebrating Christ's first coming and anticipating His return.

2. **God Keeps His Promises**

Eight specific prophecies were highlighted showing how God fulfilled every promise about Jesus' first coming:

- His purpose (Genesis 3:15)
- His mother (Isaiah 7:14)
- His mission (Isaiah 35:5-6)
- His birthplace (Micah 5:2)
- His struggle (Hosea 11:1)
- His death (Psalm 22:16)

- His resurrection (Psalm 16:10)
- His birth announcement (Malachi 3:1)

3. **Hope is Confident Expectation**

Biblical hope isn't wishful thinking - it's confident trust in a God who has proven faithful.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

1. Before this sermon, what did you know about Advent? How has your understanding changed?
2. Which of the eight prophecies mentioned was most meaningful or surprising to you? Why?
3. The sermon mentioned that some prophecies were written 700-1000 years before Jesus was born. How does this timing impact your view of Scripture's reliability?

Personal Reflection

4. The pastor asked, "Are we good at waiting?" How would you honestly answer that question about yourself?
5. What distractions during the Christmas season pull your focus away from Jesus? How can you minimize these?

6. The sermon stated: "God hasn't moved. He's always been right here close. It's me and my distractions that I sort of turn my back on him." Can you relate to this? Share your experience.

Going Deeper

7. Read Romans 15:13. How does the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies give us hope for the promises God has made to us personally?

8. The pastor mentioned promises like "I'm always with you," "I will never leave you," and "I'm coming again." Which promise do you need to hold onto most right now?

9. How does understanding that Jesus will return (the Second Coming) change how we celebrate His birth (the First Coming)?

Key Takeaways

✓ ****God is faithful**** - Every prophecy about Jesus' first coming was fulfilled exactly as promised

✓ ****The Bible is unique**** - No other religious text contains fulfilled prophecy like Scripture

✓ ****We can trust God**** - Because He kept His promises about Jesus' first coming, we can trust His promises about our lives and His second coming

✓ ****Hope is confident expectation**** - Not wishful thinking, but trust in a proven, faithful God

✓ ****Advent invites us to slow down**** - To prepare our hearts, not just our homes

Practical Applications

This Week

- ****Use the Advent Family Devotional Guide**** - Text "Advent" to 833-800-6667 or pick up a paper copy
- ****Create margin in your schedule**** - Identify one activity or commitment you can eliminate to focus more on Jesus this season
- ****Light a candle**** - Consider getting an Advent wreath for your home and lighting it weekly as a family

Daily Practice

- ****Read one prophecy about Jesus each day**** - Reflect on how God fulfilled it
- ****Practice waiting well**** - When you're stuck in traffic or waiting in line, use it as a prayer prompt: "God, help me trust Your timing"
- ****Journal your hopes**** - Write down what you're hoping for and pray over those things, trusting God's faithfulness

Group Challenge

- ****Share hope with someone**** - This week, tell someone about a promise God has kept in your life
- ****Memorize Scripture together**** - Choose one of the prophecy verses to memorize as a group (suggestion: Isaiah 7:14 or Micah 5:2)

Closing Reflection

Question for Contemplation:

"If God fulfilled over 80 prophecies about Jesus' first coming, how should that impact what you're waiting for in your life right now?"

Prayer Focus:

- Thank God for His faithfulness in keeping His promises
- Ask for patience and trust as you wait for His timing in your life
- Pray for hearts that are truly prepared to celebrate Jesus this Christmas
- Lift up specific hopes and needs within your group

For Next Week

- Complete the first week of the Advent devotional
- Come prepared to share one way you saw God's faithfulness this week
- Bring a friend or family member to group if possible

Additional Resources

- **For Families:** Use the Advent devotional guide with your children each evening
- **For Personal Study:** Read through the Gospel of Matthew, noting how often it says "to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet"

- ****For Deeper Dive:**** Study the statistical probability of fulfilled prophecy (search "Peter Stoner prophecy probability")

****Remember:**** "Who keeps His promises? GOD DOES!"

5-Day Advent Devotional: God Keeps His Promises

Day 1: The Promise of Hope

****Reading:**** Genesis 3:14-15; Isaiah 7:14

****Devotional:****

From the very beginning, when sin entered the world through Adam and Eve's disobedience, God didn't leave humanity without hope. In the Garden of Eden, He immediately promised a Savior who would crush the enemy and restore what was broken. This wasn't wishful thinking—it was God's unbreakable covenant with His creation.

The virgin birth prophecy in Isaiah, written 700 years before Jesus, shows us that God plans meticulously and perfectly. When circumstances seem impossible, when generations pass waiting for breakthrough, God is orchestrating details we cannot see. His timeline isn't our timeline, but His faithfulness never wavers.

Today, what promise are you waiting for God to fulfill? Remember that the same God who kept His word about sending Jesus keeps His promises to you. Hope isn't pretending everything is fine—it's confident expectation in the One who never fails.

****Reflection:**** What area of your life needs renewed hope today? Write down one promise from Scripture that speaks to your current situation.

Day 2: The Miracle of Divine Presence

****Reading:**** Isaiah 35:4-6; Matthew 1:18-23

****Devotional:****

Emmanuel—God with us. This wasn't just a beautiful name; it was a revolutionary promise. The Creator of the universe chose to step into human history, to experience our limitations, our pain, our temptations. He didn't send a representative or a messenger alone—He came Himself.

When Jesus walked the earth, He fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy by opening blind eyes, unstopping deaf ears, and causing the lame to leap. These weren't just physical miracles; they were signs that God was present among His people. Every healing declared: "The One you've been waiting for is here."

God hasn't changed. He still desires to be present in your daily struggles, your celebrations, your ordinary moments. You don't have to clean up your life before approaching Him. He came to meet us right where we are, in our mess, in our need.

****Reflection:**** Where do you need to experience God's presence today? Invite Him into that specific situation and watch for His movement.

Day 3: Fulfilled in the Details

****Reading:**** Micah 5:2; Luke 2:1-7

****Devotional:****

God orchestrates history with breathtaking precision. Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, yet Jesus needed to be born in Bethlehem to fulfill prophecy. So God used a pagan ruler's census decree to move them exactly where they needed to be at exactly the right time. A godless emperor unknowingly served God's eternal purpose.

This reminds us that nothing in our lives is outside God's sovereign control. The detours, the inconvenient timing, the circumstances that seem to work against us—God can use

them all to fulfill His purposes. What feels like disruption may actually be divine positioning.

When we look back on our lives, we often see how God was working behind the scenes, connecting dots we couldn't see at the time. The same God who fulfilled over 80 prophecies about Jesus' first coming is actively working in your story today.

****Reflection:**** Look back on your life. Where can you see God's hand guiding circumstances you didn't understand at the time?

Day 4: The Cost of Love

****Reading:**** Psalm 22:1, 16-18; John 19:16-30

****Devotional:****

A thousand years before crucifixion was invented, David wrote about pierced hands and feet. This wasn't coincidence—it was God revealing the depth of love He would demonstrate. Jesus didn't accidentally end up on a cross; He willingly walked toward it to fulfill the promise of redemption.

The cross represents the ultimate kept promise. God said sin required a sacrifice, and He provided His own Son. He promised to defeat Satan, and through death and resurrection, Jesus crushed the enemy's power. Every nail, every wound, every moment of suffering was love made visible.

This is the God we serve—One who doesn't just make promises from a distance but enters into our pain. He understands suffering because He experienced it. He knows betrayal, loneliness, and physical agony. And He endured it all because His love for you is that profound.

****Reflection:**** Spend time meditating on the cross today. How does Jesus' sacrifice change how you view your own struggles?

Day 5: The Promise of Return

****Reading:**** Psalm 16:8-11; Acts 2:22-32; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

****Devotional:****

The empty tomb is our guarantee. Just as God promised Jesus wouldn't remain in the grave, He fulfilled that promise on resurrection morning. Death couldn't hold Him. The grave couldn't contain Him. And because He lives, we have hope that extends beyond this life into eternity.

But the story doesn't end with His resurrection and ascension. Jesus promised to return—to make all things new, to wipe away every tear, to eliminate pain and suffering forever. Advent reminds us to live with expectation, watching and waiting for His second coming just as faithfully as the prophets waited for His first.

As we celebrate Christmas, we're not just remembering a past event. We're declaring confidence in a future promise. The same God who kept every prophecy about Jesus' birth will keep His promise to return. We can trust Him with our waiting because He has never failed.

****Reflection:**** How does the promise of Jesus' return change how you live today? What would it look like to live with expectant hope this Advent season?

****Closing Prayer for the Week:****

Lord Jesus, thank You for being the Promise Keeper. Thank You for stepping into human history to rescue us, for fulfilling every prophecy perfectly, and for proving that Your Word is trustworthy. As we wait for Your return, help us live with confident hope, knowing that You are faithful. May this Advent season draw us closer to You and prepare our hearts to celebrate Your coming—both past and future. In Your precious name, Amen.