The Promise of the Messiah

Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6-7; Micah 5:2

Key Truth: God promised a coming Deliverer who would be more than an earthly king. He would be Immanuel—God with us—the divine Son, the rightful King from David's lineage, and the eternal ruler whose kingdom would never end. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of these promises.

Introduction: The Messiah was always part of God's plan

The coming of Jesus Christ was not an unexpected event or a change in God's plan. From the earliest pages of Scripture, God revealed His intention to send a Redeemer who would defeat sin, restore what was broken, and establish His kingdom. The Old Testament contains a progressive revelation of this coming Messiah. As Scripture unfolds, God provides increasingly specific details about His identity, lineage, nature, birthplace, mission, and kingdom.

Consider the progression:

- **Genesis 3:15** — A coming offspring of the woman would defeat Satan.
- **Genesis 12:3** — Through Abraham's offspring, all nations would be blessed.
- **Genesis 49:10** — The ruler would come from the tribe of Judah.
- **2 Samuel 7:12–16** — The Messiah would come through David's royal lineage and establish an everlasting kingdom.
- **Isaiah 7:14** — The coming Deliverer would be Immanuel, God with us.
- **Isaiah 9:6–7** — The promised King would be divine and would reign forever.
- **Micah 5:2** — The ruler would come from Bethlehem, yet His origins would be from ancient days.

The New Testament opens by identifying Jesus as the fulfillment of these promises.

- **Matthew 1:1:** Jesus is identified as the son of David and the son of Abraham.
- **Galatians 4:4–5:** God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law.

The Messiah was promised, anticipated, and ultimately revealed in Jesus Christ.

PART ONE: THE PROMISE OF IMMANUEL; Isaiah 7:1–17

1. Historical Background: The Crisis During the Reign of Ahaz

Isaiah 7 takes place during the reign of King Ahaz of Judah, approximately 734–732 BC. Judah was facing a significant military and political crisis. Two neighboring kingdoms had formed an alliance against Judah:

- **Israel (the northern kingdom)**, ruled by King Pekah.
- **Aram (Syria)**, ruled by King Rezin.

- Their objective was to attack Jerusalem, overthrow Ahaz, and install another king who would cooperate with their plans.
- 2 Kings 16:5–9 and Isaiah 7:1–2.
- Ahaz was terrified. The Bible describes his heart and the hearts of his people as shaking like trees in the wind. God sent Isaiah to reassure Ahaz that these enemies would not accomplish their purpose. Isaiah delivered a remarkable message:
- **Isaiah 7:4:** God instructed Ahaz to remain calm, not to fear, and not to lose heart.
- God even offered Ahaz an opportunity to ask for a sign to confirm His promise (Isaiah 7:10–11).
- Ahaz refused, disguising his unbelief as religious humility. God then provided a sign anyway.

2. The Prophecy: A Virgin Will Conceive; Isaiah 7:14

- The Hebrew word translated *virgin* is **almah**. It refers to a young woman of marriageable age. While the word itself emphasizes youth and does not function as a technical term for virginity, it is entirely consistent with virginity.
- When the Old Testament was translated into Greek (the Septuagint), the translators used the Greek word *parthenos*, ordinarily meaning virgin. Matthew later uses this Greek wording when he identifies the birth of Jesus as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.
- **Matthew 1:18–23;** Matthew explicitly connects the miraculous conception and birth of Jesus to Isaiah 7:14.
- The significance is not merely that a child would be born. It is the identity of the child. His name would be: **IMMANUEL — GOD WITH US.**

3. Understanding the Immediate and Ultimate Fulfillment

- It is important to understand the historical setting of Isaiah's prophecy. Isaiah was speaking to Ahaz about a present political crisis. The prophecy included a time-sensitive sign: before the child reached an age of moral awareness, the two threatening kings would no longer pose the same danger (Isaiah 7:15–16).
- The precise identity of the child in the immediate historical setting is debated. Some understand the prophecy to have an initial fulfillment in Isaiah's own generation, while others emphasize its ultimate messianic fulfillment.
- The important distinction is that Matthew identifies Jesus' miraculous birth as the fulfillment of Isaiah's Immanuel prophecy.
- The prophecy has an immediate historical setting, but its fullest messianic significance reaches beyond that crisis.
- God was reassuring Judah that His promises and purposes would stand despite the threat of surrounding nations.
- Ultimately, God Himself would come to dwell among His people.

4. The Significance of Immanuel

- The Messiah would not simply be a man sent by God. He would be God coming to dwell among humanity. This is one of the foundational truths of Christianity: the incarnation.

Additional Scriptures:

- **John 1:1–3** — The Word was God and was present at creation.
- **John 1:14** — The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.
- **Colossians 2:9** — The fullness of deity dwells bodily in Christ.
- **Philippians 2:5–8** — Christ existed in the form of God and humbled Himself by taking the form of a servant.
- **Hebrews 1:1–3** — The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His nature.

Key Truth: The promised Messiah would not merely represent God to humanity. He would be God entering humanity.

PART TWO: THE PROMISE OF THE DIVINE KING; The Messiah Would Reign Forever; Isaiah 8:19–22 and Isaiah 9:1–7.

1. Historical Background: Darkness and Oppression

- Isaiah 9 must be understood in the context of the darkness surrounding Israel and Judah.
- The northern regions of Israel, particularly Zebulun and Naphtali, were among the first areas affected by Assyrian expansion.
- 2 Kings 15:29.
- These territories experienced military invasion, displacement, and oppression.
- Isaiah 8 concludes with a picture of darkness, distress, and despair.
- Then Isaiah 9 opens with a promise: **Isaiah 9:2:** The people walking in darkness would see a great light. This is a message of hope. God was promising that the darkness would not have the final word. A new day was coming, and that day would be ushered in through the arrival of a special child.
- Matthew 4:12–16 specifically connects the ministry of Jesus in Galilee to Isaiah's prophecy about the people seeing a great light.
- The Messiah would bring light into a world characterized by darkness.

2. The Birth of a Child and the Identity of a King; Isaiah 9:6

- Notice the two descriptions:
    - A Child is born.
    - A Son is given.
- The Messiah would enter the world through a human birth, yet He would be the Son given by God. This points to both His humanity and His divine identity.
- The passage then provides four remarkable descriptions of this coming King.

3. The Four Names of the Messiah

A. Wonderful Counselor

- The Messiah would possess extraordinary wisdom and understanding. He would not be dependent upon human advisers or limited by human knowledge.
- His counsel would be perfect, His judgments righteous, and His wisdom beyond comparison.
    - Isaiah 11:2–3 — The Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, and might would rest upon Him.
    - John 7:46 — No one ever spoke like Jesus.
    - Colossians 2:3 — In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

B. Mighty God

- This is one of the strongest Old Testament declarations of the Messiah's divine identity.
- The coming child is identified as Mighty God. This is not simply a description of a powerful human ruler. Isaiah uses the same Hebrew expression, *El Gibbor*, in Isaiah 10:21 in reference to God Himself.
- The Messiah would possess divine power and authority.
    - Isaiah 10:20–21 — The Mighty God of Israel.
    - John 1:1 — The Word was God.
    - Titus 2:13 — Jesus Christ is identified as our great God and Savior.
    - Hebrews 1:8 — The Father addresses the Son as God.

C. Everlasting Father

- This title is sometimes misunderstood. Isaiah is not saying that the Messiah is God the Father as a person of the Trinity. Rather, this is a royal description of the Messiah's character and relationship to His people. The expression conveys His fatherly care, protection, provision, and enduring concern for those under His rule.
- Unlike earthly kings whose reigns end, His fatherly rule and care will never end.
    - Psalm 103:13 — As a father shows compassion to his children, the Lord shows compassion to those who fear Him.
    - John 10:27–30 — Jesus protects His sheep and gives them eternal life.
    - Hebrews 13:8 — Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

D. Prince of Peace

- The Messiah would establish peace. This is more than the absence of military conflict. His reign would bring reconciliation, righteousness, restoration, and wholeness. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus would make peace between sinful humanity and a holy God.

- Isaiah 53:5 — The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.
- Romans 5:1 — We have peace with God through Jesus Christ.
- Ephesians 2:14–18 — Christ Himself is our peace.
- Colossians 1:19–20 — Through Christ, God reconciles all things to Himself, making peace through His blood.

4. The Messiah's Kingdom Would Never End; Isaiah 9:7

- Isaiah now moves from describing the identity of the Messiah to describing the nature of His kingdom.
- Notice several important truths:
  - His government will continually increase.
  - His kingdom will be established upon David's throne.
  - His kingdom will be characterized by justice and righteousness.
  - His kingdom will endure forever.
- The Lord Himself will accomplish this.
- This is a direct connection to God's covenant with David.

2 Samuel 7:12–16

- God promised David that his royal house, throne, and kingdom would be established forever. Although David's earthly descendants would experience failure and the kingdom would eventually fall, God's covenant promise would not fail.
- Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of that covenant.
  - Psalm 89:3–4 — God promises to establish David's offspring and throne forever.
  - Jeremiah 23:5–6 — A righteous Branch from David's line will reign as King.
  - Luke 1:31–33 — Gabriel tells Mary that Jesus will receive David's throne and reign over an everlasting kingdom.
  - Revelation 11:15 — The kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, and He will reign forever.

Key Truth: Jesus did not come merely to be a religious teacher or a temporary earthly ruler. He came as the divine King whose kingdom will never end.

PART 3 — THE IDENTITY AND KINGDOM OF THE MESSIAH: ISAIAH 9:6–7

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given..." This passage is one of the clearest Old Testament revelations concerning the identity and authority of the coming Messiah.

1. Historical background

- Isaiah 9 must be understood in the context of the Assyrian threat and the darkness confronting the northern territories of Israel.
- Isaiah 8:19–22 and 9:1–2.
- The people were experiencing distress, oppression, and darkness. Yet Isaiah announces that a great light would shine upon those walking in darkness. This promise introduces the coming of a remarkable King.
- Matthew 4:12–16 later connects this passage with Jesus beginning His ministry in Galilee.

2. A child is born, a Son is given

- Isaiah makes an important distinction: **A child is born.**
- This speaks to the Messiah's humanity. He would enter the world through human birth. **A Son is given.**
- This points beyond ordinary human birth to the unique identity of the Son. The Messiah would be born as a child, but He is also the Son given by God.
- Compare John 3:16 and John 1:14.

3. The four names of the Messiah; Isaiah gives four remarkable descriptions of this coming King.

A. Wonderful Counselor

- The Messiah possesses extraordinary wisdom and understanding. He does not need human counsel to determine what is right. His wisdom is perfect, and His decisions are righteous.
    - Isaiah 11:2–4 — The Spirit of wisdom and understanding rests upon Him.
    - Colossians 2:3 — In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
    - John 7:46 — No one ever spoke like Jesus.

B. Mighty God

- This is one of the strongest declarations of the Messiah's divine identity.
- The Hebrew expression is *El Gibbor*, meaning Mighty God or Powerful God. Isaiah does not describe the coming King as merely a godly man or an extraordinary political leader.
- He identifies Him with divine titles. Compare Isaiah 10:20–21, where the same expression, Mighty God, is used in reference to God Himself.
    - John 1:1 — The Word was God.
    - John 20:28 — Thomas calls Jesus, "My Lord and my God!"
    - Titus 2:13 — Jesus Christ is identified as our great God and Savior.
    - Hebrews 1:8 — The Father addresses the Son as God.

C. Everlasting Father

- This title can initially be confusing because Jesus is the Son, not the Father, in the Trinity. The expression emphasizes the Messiah's eternal nature and fatherly care for His people. It is often understood as Father of Eternity or the One who possesses and administers eternity.
- The title does not collapse the distinction between the Father and the Son. Jesus is eternally divine, and His care and rule over His people are enduring.
    - John 10:28–30 — Jesus gives eternal life to His sheep.
    - Hebrews 13:8 — Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
    - John 14:9 — Whoever has seen Jesus has seen the Father.

D. Prince of Peace

- The Messiah would establish peace. But this is much greater than the absence of war or political conflict. He would reconcile humanity to God and ultimately establish a kingdom characterized by righteousness and peace.
    - Isaiah 53:5 — The punishment that brought us peace was upon Him.
    - Romans 5:1 — We have peace with God through Jesus Christ.
    - Ephesians 2:14–18 — Christ Himself is our peace.
    - Colossians 1:19–20 — Through Him, God reconciles all things to Himself.

4. The government of the Messiah — Isaiah 9:7

- Isaiah continues by declaring that the government and peace of this King will increase without end.
- His kingdom will be established upon:
    - The throne of David.
    - Justice.
    - Righteousness.
    - An eternal reign.
- This directly connects with God's covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7:12–16.
- Unlike earthly kings, whose kingdoms rise and fall, the Messiah's kingdom will never end.
    - Daniel 7:13–14 — The Son of Man receives an everlasting dominion.
    - Luke 1:32–33 — Jesus receives the throne of David and reigns forever.
    - Revelation 11:15 — The kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.
    - Revelation 22:3–5 — His servants reign forever.

5. Who establishes this kingdom?

- Isaiah ends with an important declaration: "The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this."
- The fulfillment of this promise does not depend upon human effort, political strength, or military power. God Himself will accomplish it.

Key takeaway: The Messiah is not merely a descendant of David who will become a great king. He is the divine King whose righteous government and peace will never end.

PART 4 — THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE MESSIAH: MICAH 5:2

1. Historical background

Micah prophesied during the eighth century BC, during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. He ministered during a period of political instability, corruption, injustice, and growing Assyrian aggression. Micah confronted the sin of Israel and Judah while also proclaiming God's future restoration. In Micah 5, the prophet contrasts the present weakness and distress of God's people with the coming of a future ruler who will shepherd Israel.

2. Bethlehem Ephrathah

Why is Bethlehem significant? Bethlehem was a small town in Judah, approximately five miles south of Jerusalem. It was not a major political or military center. Yet it held tremendous biblical significance.

Bethlehem was the city of David. 1 Samuel 16:1–13.

- David was a shepherd from Bethlehem before he became king of Israel. God chose David, the youngest son of Jesse, and anointed him to become king. Now Micah announces that another ruler will come from Bethlehem. This coming ruler would be connected to the Davidic promise but would be far greater than David.

3. The ruler's origins are from ancient times

- This is one of the most significant parts of the prophecy. Micah does not simply say that a future king will be born in Bethlehem. He describes this ruler as one whose origins are from of old, from ancient times. The Hebrew expression can carry the idea of antiquity or ancient days.
- The passage has traditionally been understood by Christians as pointing toward the Messiah's preexistence and eternal nature. This is significant when compared with John 1:1–3.
- Jesus did not begin to exist when He was born in Bethlehem. His human life began through the incarnation, but He existed eternally before His human birth.
    - John 1:1–3 — The Word existed in the beginning.
    - John 8:58 — Before Abraham was, Jesus declares, "I am."
    - Colossians 1:16–17 — All things were created through Him and for Him; He is before all things.
    - Hebrews 1:2–3 — God made the universe through His Son.

4. The Messiah would shepherd His people; Micah 5:3–5.

- Micah describes this ruler as one who will stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of the LORD. His greatness will reach the ends of the earth. And He will be their peace.
- Notice the similarities with Isaiah 9:
    - A coming ruler.
    - An everlasting kingdom.
    - A reign characterized by peace.
    - A ruler whose authority extends beyond Israel.
- The Messiah would not simply restore a political kingdom. His rule would have worldwide significance.

5. New Testament fulfillment — Matthew 2:1–6

- When the wise men arrived in Jerusalem asking where the King of the Jews had been born, Herod consulted the chief priests and scribes. They immediately identified Bethlehem as the location. They quoted Micah 5:2. This is significant because the religious leaders understood that the Messiah was expected to come from Bethlehem. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, fulfilling this specific prophetic expectation.
    - Luke 2:1–7 — Jesus is born in Bethlehem.
    - John 7:40–43 — People debate whether Jesus can be the Messiah because of His Galilean background.
    - Matthew 2:4–6 — The religious leaders identify Bethlehem from Micah's prophecy.

Key takeaway: The Messiah's birthplace was not accidental. God identified Bethlehem centuries before Jesus was born.

PART 5 — THE MESSIAH FULFILLS THE PROMISES

When we bring these three prophecies together, we see a remarkable picture of the coming Messiah.

Prophecy	What God revealed	Fulfillment
Isaiah 7:14	Born of a virgin; Immanuel	Matthew 1:18–23
Isaiah 9:6	A child born; Mighty God	John 1:1–14
Isaiah 9:7	Son of David; eternal King	Luke 1:32–33
Micah 5:2	Born in Bethlehem	Matthew 2:1–6
Micah 5:4–5	Shepherd and Prince of Peace	John 10:11; Ephesians 2:14

Consider how these prophecies complement one another:

1. **Isaiah 7:14 tells us something about His birth and identity:** He would be Immanuel, God with us.

2. **Isaiah 9:6–7 tells us something about His nature and authority:** He would be the divine King whose kingdom would never end.
3. **Micah 5:2 tells us something about His birthplace and origins:** He would come from Bethlehem, yet His origins are from ancient times.

These are not disconnected predictions. Together, they provide a progressively clearer picture of God's promised Messiah.

Additional Messianic Prophecies Worth Knowing
The following passages further demonstrate the consistency of God's redemptive plan:

- Psalm 22:1–18 — Describes suffering that finds striking parallels in the crucifixion of Jesus.
- Psalm 110:1–4 — The Messiah is David's Lord and an eternal priest.
- Isaiah 11:1–10 — The Branch from Jesse will reign in righteousness.
- Isaiah 42:1–4 — God's chosen servant will bring justice to the nations.
- Isaiah 53:3–12 — The suffering servant bears the sins of many.
- Jeremiah 23:5–6 — A righteous Branch from David will reign as King.
- Zechariah 9:9 — The King comes humble and riding on a donkey.
- Zechariah 12:10 — God's people will look upon the one they have pierced.

PART 6 — WHY THE PROMISE OF THE MESSIAH MATTERS
These prophecies are not merely interesting examples of fulfilled predictions. They reveal foundational truths about God, Jesus, and our salvation.

1. God's promises are certain.
God revealed His plan over centuries, through different prophets and historical circumstances. What God promises, He accomplishes. Numbers 23:19; Joshua 21:45; 2 Corinthians 1:20.

2. Jesus is more than a great teacher or prophet.
Isaiah identifies the Messiah as Mighty God. John identifies Jesus as the Word who was God and became flesh. The Christian faith rests upon the identity of Jesus as both fully God and fully man. John 1:1–14; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:1–3.

3. Jesus came to fulfill God's redemptive plan.
The virgin birth, His Davidic lineage, His birthplace, His suffering, and His resurrection all belong to the larger story of redemption. Jesus did not simply come to provide a good example or improve human behavior. He came to save sinners and reconcile them to God. Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10; 1 Timothy 1:15.

4. Jesus is the King whose kingdom will never end.

Earthly kingdoms rise and fall. Human rulers come and go. But the Messiah's kingdom is eternal. His authority is absolute, His righteousness is perfect, and His reign will never end. Daniel 7:13–14; Revelation 19:11–16; Revelation 22:3–5.

CONCLUSION — THE PROMISE BECAME FLESH; John 1:14 and Galatians 4:4–5.

For generations, God's people anticipated the coming of the Messiah. The prophets spoke of Him. The covenants pointed toward Him. The Scriptures progressively revealed Him. Then, in the fullness of time, God sent His Son.

- The child was born in Bethlehem.
- The virgin gave birth.
- The promised Son entered the world.
- The Mighty God came in human flesh.
- Immanuel—God with us.
- And the King who was promised will reign forever.

The central message of the Old Testament is not simply that a Messiah would come. It is that God was preparing the world for Jesus Christ.

KEY SCRIPTURES TO REMEMBER

- Genesis 3:15 — The promised offspring who would defeat Satan.
- 2 Samuel 7:12–16 — The promise of David's eternal kingdom.
- Isaiah 7:14 — Immanuel, God with us.
- Isaiah 9:6–7 — The divine Son and eternal King.
- Micah 5:2 — The ruler from Bethlehem whose origins are ancient.
- Matthew 1:18–23 — The virgin birth.
- Matthew 2:1–6 — The fulfillment of Micah's prophecy.
- Luke 1:32–33 — The eternal throne of David.
- John 1:1–14 — The eternal Word became flesh.

WEEK 9 SUMMARY: God's promise of the Messiah was revealed progressively throughout the Old Testament and fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He is the promised Deliverer, the divine Son, the eternal King, and the Savior of the world.