

Journey CHURCH

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Leader Guide

The Case for Christmas Session 4: The Prophetic Fingerprint

Before you watch:

If there's a group member you haven't yet partnered with for this section, get together and talk about the following questions:

- How many times would you guess you've watched *A Christmas Carol*? Which is your favorite version? Why?
- Who is your favorite actor to play the part of Ebenezer Scrooge? What is it about this actor's performance that makes it your favorite?
- Why do you think there have been so many adaptations and retellings of *A Christmas Carol*? What about the story do you think most resonates with people?

Video Teaching

Play the video segment for session four. As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or concepts that stand out to you.

Notes

The Bible's prophets about the coming of the Messiah lead us not only to the place where he would be born but to the very individual himself. In the end, only the baby in the manger can be pinpointed as the one-and-only Messiah and Son of God.

The prophet Micah had foretold the birthplace of the Messiah hundreds of years before the time of Christ. So when Herod asked his chief priests and teachers where the Messiah would be born, they knew the answer right away: *Bethlehem*

Critics say Matthew was wrong when he applied Isaiah 7:4 to the birth of Jesus because the prophecy referred to King Ahaz, the word *virgin* was a mistranslation, and Jesus was not named Immanuel. But delving into this controversy, we find:

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- First, there was a broader messianic context that remained unfulfilled.
- Second, there was no one word in biblical Hebrews that only meant *virgin*.
- Third, biblical names are often symbolic- Jesus *is* Immanuel.

Billions of people have lived in history. But only Jesus managed to fulfill the dozens of ancient prophecies required to be the Messiah.

The real purpose of Christmas is Easter. Through Jesus' atoning death on the cross, he paid for our sins so the doors of heaven could be flung open wide for us.

As Dr. Michael Brown concluded, "What sacrifice is great enough to cover the guilt of the entire world? Who's pure enough? Who's perfect enough? Only this one, the great Son of God."

Paul captures it so well in Philippians 2:6-11 when he describes the wonder and beauty and power of the incarnation. Perhaps, in a sense, it was even the very first Christmas carol!

Group Discussion

Once the video has concluded, break up into small groups for a final time of discussion. Once again, try to get with the same people you have been meeting with for the past sessions.

1. In general, how would you describe the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament? How important is it that the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah are fulfilled in Jesus in the New Testament?

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2. Read aloud Philippians 2:1-11. What strikes you as you hear this description of Christ humbling himself? What does the passage mean to you personally?

3. How do you respond to the idea that “the real purpose of Christmas is Easter”? How do you connect the two holidays in your life? What advice would you give someone who doesn’t see the connection between them?

4. What has this four-week study meant to you? What are two or three things you’ve learned as a result of this time together? For what questions did you get answers? What unanswered questions are still rolling around in your mind?

Closing Prayer

Take a few moments for one final session of prayer. Thank the Lord for the answers he has delivered to your group during the past few weeks and continue to ask him for the ones that continue to be unanswered. If appropriate, share your contact information with the other group members so you can all remain connected even after this study has concluded.