



# THE CAST OF Christmas

## PROPHETS—Preparation and Expectation of the Coming King

“Christmas is certainly a time of waiting and expectation. You can feel the expectation build as children grow more and more antsy in their classes at school as they wait for the big day to arrive. As we prepare and wait, it occurs to me that the vast majority of our lives is filled with waiting and preparation while only a fraction is filled with actual experience, celebration, or doing stuff. Consider the Thanksgiving meal many of us recently enjoyed. How long did it take to prepare it? How long did it take to eat?

Often when we think we’re finally doing stuff, we’re actually just waiting and preparing for stuff in a new location. Take camping. It feels like you’re doing something. Actually, you’re just waiting and preparing outdoors. You prepare the fire. You prepare the tents for sleeping. You prepare the meals for cooking.

If we stop to think about it, we really shouldn’t be surprised that life is filled with so much more preparation and waiting than doing, because in some ways preparation *is the doing*. *In fact, preparation is often the point. I don’t think it’s too much of a stretch to say that our short time on earth is more about preparation for eternity in heaven than what we accomplish or do on this earth. In fact, the best use of our time on earth is to prepare our hearts to become more like Jesus and to help other people get prepared to meet Jesus in heaven.*

The primary point of the Old Testament is preparation for one moment. What some call the protevangelium near the very beginning of creation points to this fact. *Protos is the Greek word for “first,” and evangelion means “good news or gospel.” So, the protevangelium is what most followers believe to be the first declaration of the Gospel. It takes place directly after Adam and Eve fell into sin. God declared to the serpent in Genesis 3:15: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*

The work the serpent began that was expressed through Adam and Eve’s conscious choice to sin would one day be crushed through the arrival of her offspring. That offspring, of course, is the One whom Christmas points to and celebrates. From the moment of the first sin onward, the entire Old Testament prepares and points us to the great moment when our Savior and Messiah came to save us from the curse of sin. The law and all the temple sacrifices show our need for a Savior. The slavery and sorrow of the Israelites point to the bondage we all face before we acknowledge His arrival. The prophets looked and longed for His coming. Seven hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Micah was inspired by God to look forward to His birth. In Micah 5:2, he wrote, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” Chris Tomlin’s modern hymn proclaims: “Emmanuel, Emmanuel, God incarnate here to dwell . . . Praise His name Emmanuel.”

# SMALL GROUP GROWTH GUIDE

December 12, 2021

**BIG IDEA:** Most of life is spent in preparation and expectation of what you're looking forward to.

## **BELONG**

1. What do you enjoy preparing for in life?
2. Define preparation.

## **GROW**

1. Read John 14:1-4, Romans 9:14–26, Ephesians 1:3-10. Based on just these few Scriptures, what can be said about what God has been preparing for since before the world was created? What are the consequences of this plan according to the Romans passage vs 17? What happened to Pharaoh? Why? See Exodus 5:2. What happens to all those who ask the same question?
2. Read Deuteronomy 18:15. Consider how Moses was referred in the Jewish culture. Based on what you know about Moses, his deeds, his character, what type of man should they be looking for? Compare this with what you know about Jesus. How are they the same? How are they different?
3. Transport yourself back in time. Based on Moses saying, look for a prophet like me from among you, what type of character would they be looking for?
4. Roughly 1600 years passed from the time of Moses to the birth of Jesus. With so much time passing, can you understand why the Jews didn't give Jesus any consideration that he was the one they were waiting for?
5. God is his wisdom and mercy revealed his plan to his prophets to preach to the people so that they would be prepared for his coming. What did that look like during the time of Moses and the Prophets?
6. Once Jesus came, died for the sin of the world so that God is able to forgive men, and resurrected according to Acts 17:30-32 what is God's command?
7. John the Baptist was the last and greatest prophet. What was the totality of his ministry? Luke 3:3,16, Isaiah 40:3-5
8. What is another word Dale mentioned to repent? How does Peter, in his first sermon, tell the people to prepare for Christ? See Acts 2 37-40.
9. Dale shared for principles of preparation. Repentance, Intensity of Expectation, Fruit Bearing, Waiting for Rescue. Read Matthew 24:43-46-what is the level of intensity and how is it measured? Read John 15:1-6-what is God's process for bearing more fruit? What is getting "pruned" away? Read John 14:1-3-Aside from the timing of such an event, what comfort do you think this gave the disciples? Does it do the same for you? Why or why not? How did Paul understand this? 2 Corinthians 5:1

## **REACH**

How prepared are you for Jesus' second coming? How can you encourage one another to be prepared for rescue?