



## WEEK 1 GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY CHAD BRUEGMAN

### START

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

**What is your favorite Christmas time tradition that either you, or your family participates in now, or that you enjoyed as a kid?**

### SHARE

Welcome to our series, "Foretold."

As we enter into the Christmas season, some of us enter with excitement and sheer happiness. For others, this season is one that we just simply must get through. Memories from our childhood could be filled with wonder and love, while others are filled with sadness and strife. Despite your past experiences with this time of year, the fact remains that we are celebrating the Savior of the world coming to the earth, which is a wonderful thing! The Lord has so much he wants to celebrate with you, and through you. It can be easy to associate Christmas with the all the doing, going, and buying. Our minds easily gravitate to what Christmas adds to our schedule; good and bad. Yet there is so much history, so much depth, and endless love poured out by our Savior surrounding this Holiday.

Whether you have followed Christ for decades, or just for a couple of days, the birth of Jesus is a widely known story. However, it is so much more than just a neat story to read once a year. This birth was prophesied hundreds and hundreds of years in advance. Within this singular prophecy, the Lord wove in many more prophecies and miracles. We live in a culture where doubt is a form of apathy. This story sounds too good to be true, and so for many it remains just that, a good story, and the incredible implications for us go unrealized.

It is amazing to know that Jesus was the only major religious figure to have his birth foretold. The prophecies surrounding Jesus' birth created a great expectancy for the people of that time. For decades, prophecies were spoken about what type of family Jesus would be born into, who would he would be born of, where he would be born, as well as who would worship him. These prophecies helped those he would eventually save – to prepare their hearts for their Messiah. The Lord not only prophesied all aspects of his son's birth, but every single prophecy was fulfilled. But even beyond that, those prophecies gave his people HOPE. Can you imagine life without hope? Hope is that inner feeling or positive emotion that allows us to believe things can get better, or that good things can happen for us in the future. It's something we are born with. When we lose hope, then life is as bleak and meaningless as it can be. The hope of a Messiah, planted in the hearts of the Israelites through the many prophesies of his birth, sustained them through hundreds of years of oppression and hardship. God designed us with the capacity for hope, and then he provided the

ultimate object of our hope, the birth of a Savior. And now we live in hopeful expectancy of his return. (It's almost like hope is meant to be a really important part of what it means to be a Christ follower.) God did not need to prophesy Jesus' birth. Jesus still would be our savior. Yet he chose to draw us in with the expectancy of a hope that would save us. He chose to lay the foundation for Jesus' arrival, involve lineages, and grow the faith of not only the people of that time, but ours as well.

This week Chad spoke to us about our innate human desire to know the future. Despite our best efforts, our sharpest wisdom, and our utmost planning, we will never possess knowledge of what the future holds. God will sometimes allow us glimpses into the future, yet he is the only one who knows the entire picture. As with Jesus' birth, he granted glimpses, yet his planning was much more complex than those quick glimpses. The greatest sacrifice we will ever know was planned with great intricacy. Not only did the Lord desire so deeply to save us through his son, he did so in a way that would leave us in complete awe of who he is.

**Let's read Matthew 1:1, Genesis 22:17-18 and Isaiah 11:1.**

Both of those scriptures in the book of Genesis and in the book of Isaiah are just a couple of the Old Testament prophecies that were given that pointed toward the birth of a Messiah. In Genesis, the Lord promises Abraham that through his offspring, the nations of the earth will be blessed. Then we see in Matthew 1 that David was a son of Abraham, and then in the book of Isaiah we are given a hint that the line of David (son of Jesse) will "bear much fruit." Think about that! Those Old Testament scriptures were written hundreds of years before Christ was born and in the genealogy listed in Matthew you see the fulfillment of those scriptures.

**What is it like for you to either learn or remember how much and how widely prophesied Jesus' birth was? How can this act thousands of years ago strengthen our faith and relationship with Christ today?**

**Have you ever experienced the Lord speaking to you about, or showing you a glimpse into the future? What was the time like in-between hearing from Him and it coming to fruition?**

## GROW

Not only did God decide to chronicle Christ's birth long before he was born, he decided to bring him into the world through impossible conception, by earthly standards. This conception protected glory from being displaced. This conception did not happen because of any human. However, he still chose to invite mankind into the process. He chose imperfect Mary to bear his perfect son.

Take a look at this commentary by the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia:

*What this implies.* —How is this phenomenon of a sinless personality in Jesus to be explained? It is itself a miracle, and can only be made credible by a creative miracle in Christ's origin. It may be argued that a Virgin Birth does not of itself secure sinlessness, but it will hardly be disputed that at least a sinless personality implies miracle in its production. It is precisely because of this that the modern spirit feels bound to reject it. In the Gospels it is not the Virgin Birth by itself which is invoked to explain Christ's sinlessness, but the supernatural conception by the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35). It is because of this conception that the birth is a virgin one. No explanation of the supernatural element in Christ's Person is more rational or credible.

**Let's read Matthew 1: 20-23 and Isaiah 7:14.**

As Chad talked about, Mary and Joseph suffered greatly by participating in Christ's birth. This was not a decision made because they would receive fame and love from their families and townspeople. Instead they would be misunderstood, judged, ostracized, and endure ridicule and hardship. This was a decision they made after being invited by the Lord, because they knew with their entire heart and soul, *it was the Lord*.

The Lord bestowed the weightiest prophecy, with the greatest implications this world has known, on two teenagers. They were not perfect in their faith, and they didn't have the benefit of faith strengthened through decades of relationship with God. Yet they listened to and believed the Lord. Their humble obedience and belief in the Lord's prophetic words allowed them to be a part of the birth of the Savior of the entire world.

**It is easy to lose the awe and wonder in Christ's birth. What does, or can it do to our everyday life if we keep that wonder and the hope it brings in the forefront of our minds?**

**Has there been a time in your life when you felt God asking something of you that felt like it was "too much?" How did you handle it? What was the outcome? What did you learn from that experience?**

**The Lord welcomes our questions and we see multiple characters in the Bible wrestling with the idea of God's nature. Do you have any questions or doubts about Christ's birth?**

## MOVE

Chad spoke about Micah's prophecy in Matthew chapter two, in which Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. This prophecy came six hundred years before Christ was actually born. We often struggle with the Lord's timing schedule, yet here we see the Lord completely unconcerned about how quickly his prophecies would come true. Not only did the Lord feel no rush to prove himself; can you image what it was like to be Micah? The Lord used him to prophesy about this great miracle, yet Micah's words were not fulfilled for six hundred years.

### **Let's read Matthew 2:14-15**

Around 750 years before Joseph and Mary had to flee to Egypt, we read in Hosea 11:1 about the prophet Hosea being used by the Lord to further document the coming Savior. When it was safe to come back home after Herod had died, Mary and Joseph decided to return to the town of Nazareth, thus fulfilling the prophecy that Jesus would be born a Nazarene. To Mary and Joseph these events could have easily felt like everything and everyone was against them, as they feared for the life of their unborn son. Yet these events were only more confirmation of the Lord's divine plan, set in motion hundreds and hundreds of years before.

As we enter into this Christmas season, let's commit to being awed by Christ's birth. Right now, your future may seem bright and full of possibility. Or your future may seem hopeless and impossible. Whatever season of life you are in, there is always room for more heavenly awe. We can rest in the awe and hope of knowing that our future is in the hands of a loving, complex, and faithful God. He wove so many impossible elements together, to bring a perfect Savior into this world, so that he could ultimately sacrifice his miracle child, in order to save our souls.

**What can you do to tangibly add more "awe" into your relationship with Christ? How can you share that with others?**

**After hearing about the multiple prophecies that Chad spoke about surrounding Christ's birth, what might the Lord be speaking to you today about your relationship with Him?**

## **PRAY**

As a group, spend some time praying for each other, especially as we enter into the Christmas season. Pray that the Lord will reveal himself in a new way this Christmas. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

## **TO GO**

### **Isaiah 9:6**

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*