

GOD KNOWS WHAT HE'S ABOUT

God Keeps His Promises

Isaiah 7:14; 9:6–7; Micah 5:2

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY



LET'S BEGIN HERE

There are days that just stand out, bursting with joy . . . graduating high school or college . . . landing our dream job . . . our wedding day. Then there are those days we endure with heaviness and grief: a friend's betrayal . . . the rebellion of a child . . . the death of a parent. Most of our days, however, are filled with the mundanity of the familiar. The everyday grind can be predictable, ordinary. We may struggle to believe that a supernatural God could be at work in such humble everyday circumstances.

We may be able to recite the familiar passage of Scripture found in Romans 8:28: "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."

But do we *know*? When crises and hardships creep into our lives, are we confident that God's watchful eye never fails us?

The story of the birth of Jesus didn't begin in the New Testament; it was foretold—prophesied—hundreds of years before. God made a promise, and He kept it. God's prophecies become reality, and His words are truth. We can rest assured that just as the will of God took place in a lowly manger, God will work in our lives—even in our most mundane circumstances—to fulfill His extraordinary will.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Oh, the treasures to be found in the Old Testament! The Christmas story of the virgin who conceived, the little town of Bethlehem, and the Savior born to deliver the world is easily found in the New Testament gospels, but the details were foreshadowed with specificity by the prophets Isaiah and Micah.

Old Testament prophets served as God's mouthpieces to communicate future events and to compel God's people to repent and turn back to Him. Rather than allow His people to languish in spiritual starvation, God extended warnings and opportunities for repentance. No wonder, then, that in the insignificant town of Bethlehem ("house of bread"), the Bread of Life was born.

Quotable

God doesn't make promises in a random manner. He makes statements that are fulfilled.

What a magnificent thought to know that when God gives us His Word, He never will forget.

— Charles R. Swindoll



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Observation: Entering the Scenes

Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6–7 portray historical accounts that occurred in a specific *context*. To properly interpret the text we need to take time to observe it as it was written, under the circumstances in which it was written.

Chuck mentioned that Isaiah's prophecies were declared around 700 BC—that's 700 years before the birth of Jesus. Chuck also stated in his sermon that Isaiah's words served as a *double fulfillment* of prophecy. What prophecy was fulfilled in the book of Isaiah and then ultimately in the person of Jesus Christ?

Read Isaiah 7, then answer the following questions.

Who are the main characters in the chapter?

Ahaz was king of what region?

Who were Ahaz's antagonists in this chapter?

How many times did God speak to Ahaz in the chapter?

Did Ahaz accept or reject God's message?

What was the sign that God gave to Ahaz?

What would this sign foretell?





Interpretation: Understanding the Meaning

Here's some background on Isaiah 7. Isaiah was commissioned by God to prophesy to a people who heard yet didn't understand the word of the Lord (Isaiah 6:9). In Isaiah 7, Ahaz the king of Judah evidenced this spiritual deafness. Ahaz feared for his kingdom because the king of Israel had partnered with Aram's king to invade Judah's capital city, Jerusalem. However, the Lord of Hosts had covenanted with Ahaz' ancestor David to protect his throne forever (2 Samuel 7:12–16) and assured Ahaz that those rival kings would not overtake Judah.

The Lord even spoke in close terms with Ahaz, saying, "Ask the LORD your God for a sign of confirmation" (Isaiah 7:11), and He offered assurance to Ahaz. But Ahaz, with empty modesty, rejected the Lord's assurance, as he had already planned a counter-alliance with Assyria. How ironic that Ahaz used a biblical concept—likely quoting Deuteronomy 6:16—to refuse dependence on God.

Ahaz had a choice: believe *God's promise* to David or believe in *Assyria's power* to protect Judah. What does Ahaz's choice say about his relationship to God?

Ahaz probably misused Deuteronomy 6:16—"You must not test the LORD your God as you did when you complained at Massah"—to counter God's offer of a sign of His presence. But the Lord *invited* Ahaz to ask Him for a sign! Look up "Massah" on a site like biblegateway.com and read the passages that reference that place, paying particular attention to Exodus 17.

What role does faithlessness play in both Isaiah 7 and the incident at Massah?



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Contrast Ahaz's response to the message delivered by Isaiah with Joseph's encounter with the angel Gabriel in Matthew 1:20–25. What are some key differences?

Ultimately, both Ahaz and Joseph saw the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. For Ahaz, the birth of Immanuel was a sign of calamity. For Joseph, the coming of Messiah was the sign for the commencement of deliverance.



Correlation: Comparing Scripture with Scripture

Here are some key Old Testament passages—including Isaiah 7:14 and Micah 5:2—that foretell the coming of Jesus along with their New Testament corollaries:

- His virgin birth: Isaiah 7:14 (compare with Matthew 1:18, 24–25 and Luke 1:26–35)
- His birth in Bethlehem: Micah 5:2 (compare with Matthew 2:1, 4–8; John 7:42; and Luke 2:4–7)
- His Davidic heritage: 1 Chronicles 17:11–14 (compare with Matthew 3:17; Mark 9:7; and Luke 9:35)
- His prophet forerunner: Isaiah 40:3 (compare with John 1:23)
- His piercing and scourging: Isaiah 53:5 (compare with Matthew 27:26)
- His rising from the dead: Psalm 16:10 (compare with Luke 24:46 and Acts 2:31)

Write down your thoughts as you reflect on these fulfilled prophecies, written by diverse authors over the course of hundreds of years.



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Scripture shows us that God fulfills biblical prophecies exactly as He said He would—further evidence of the absolute truthfulness of God's Word. And because the Bible is completely truthful, we can rely wholly on its message of love and salvation of God's people through Jesus Christ.



Searching the Scriptures Tips

Just as we need tools in the kitchen to help us cook our meals, we need Bible study tools to help us feed ourselves God's Word. The tools we recommend for studying Scripture are a Bible dictionary, such as *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, and a commentary, such as *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*. Versions of the Bible are available at BibleGateway.com, and an excellent online Bible commentary by Thomas L. Constable is at lumina.bible.org.



Application: God Will Not Forget His Promises

Chuck Swindoll offers a single, powerful application in his message: *God will not forget His promises*.

What does this truth mean to you in your present circumstances?

Hebrews 6:10 states: "For God is not unjust. He will not forget how hard you have worked for him and how you have shown your love to him by caring for other believers, as you still do."

Meditate on Hebrews 6:10, and write a personal application of this Scripture.



A FINAL PRAYER

Oh, Lord, You have been our help in ages past, and You are our hope for years to come. Thank You for being faithful to keep Your promises. Help me to perpetually put my trust in You. Amen.



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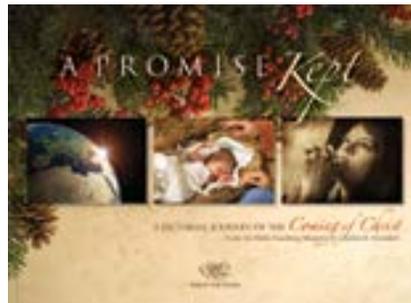
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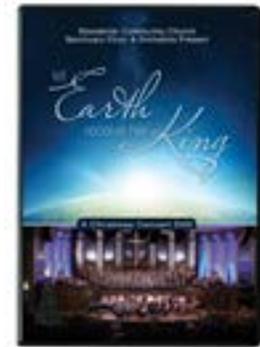
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2017–2018 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Sharifa Stevens in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Searching the Scriptures Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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