

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR WEEK OF DECEMBER 12-18

Series Title: Hope has a Name

Message Title: The Gift of Hope

INTRODUCTION:

It is beginning to look a lot like Christmas! Everywhere you look you see evidence that we have entered the most wonderful time of the year. For some of us, this might look like Christmas lights hung outside, maybe eggnog in the fridge or just the stress that comes with all that has to be done in the next couple weeks. For others, it could be a different emotion as you navigate your first Christmas without a loved one or are struggling through an unexpected curveball life has thrown your way. No matter what you are going through, this Christmas we want to remind you of the hope that has come in the person of Jesus. In our new series, "Hope has a Name" we will to remind you of the hope that you have in Jesus.

Before Your Small Group Meeting:

- Watch Pastor John's Message
- Read Isaiah 9:6

DISCUSSION

1. What jumped out at you the most from Pastor John's message this weekend?
2. What if anything makes Christmas difficult for you? What do you do to deal with the difficulty?
3. What parts of your life are off limits to change? What would you do if God asked you to change those parts of your life? Explain.
4. In what ways does your views of your earthy father affect the way you view your Heavenly Father?

RESPOND IN PRAYER

Spend time in prayer thanking God that Jesus is our Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Isaiah 9:6

9:6 This positive oracle comes to a climactic end by announcing the birth of a son who would reign forever as a righteous Davidic ruler (one very different from Ahaz). The prophet's message provides information about his (a) birth; (b) role in government; (c) names; (d) reign of peace; and (e) just eternal rule on the throne of David. It also offers strong assurances that God will accomplish all these things.

The initial announcement that a child "will be born" (yullad prophetic perfect verb) is further explained in the parallel phrase, God "will give a son to us," that is, to the people of Judah. The second line emphasizes that this is a work of God's gracious giving, not just a coincidence. No date of birth in the future is hinted at, and the only comparable son promised by God in earlier oracles was Immanuel in 7:14–15. An identification marker that links these two sons is that they both will be righteous Davidic rulers. But the two sons do not have identical names. Concerning this Davidic ruler, "he [presumably God] will call his name"³⁴³ (not passive, "he will be called" as in NIV) titles that represent his character and roles. The eight words that follow could be eight names, but since Immanuel, Shear-Jashub, and many other Hebrew names comprise two words (Isaiah means "God saves), it seems natural to divide these eight words into four titles.³⁴⁵

a) "Wonderful Counselor" combines the idea of doing something "wonderful, extraordinary, miraculous" (pele') with the skill of "giving wise advice, making plans, counsel." This suggests that this son's life will somehow exhibit "miraculous acts of God"³⁴⁷ employed in the sphere of wise planning or decision-making. Since God is the source of all miraculous events and his plans are the wisest counsel to follow, God will work in and through this son to demonstrate his extraordinary wisdom to plan wonderful miraculous things. These unspecified wonderful plans will be the subject of later revelation.

R. A. Carlson noticed that if one connects the first word of the first name pele' and the first word of the last name śar (a connection that few readers would naturally put together) one gets a word (pele' śar) almost identical to the second name of the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III, thus he thinks this future Jewish king is being presented as one greater than their Assyrian overlord who was trusted to save Ahaz from Pekah and Rezin in the Syro-Ephraimite War. Although Carlson hypothesized this and other Akkadian connections to make this message an anti-Assyrian oracle, these connections are not particularly strong and draw attention away from the prophet's fundamental purpose of focusing his audience's attention on their future Davidic messianic king.

b) The second dual name "Mighty God" ('ēl gibbôr) includes a divine name similar to the name Ezekiel (God will be my strength). If one supplies a verb, the name might mean, "God is mighty" or "God is a mighty warrior," similar to Deut 10:17; Ps 24:8; 89:14. By itself, this name does not automatically mean that this son is a divine person, because many names include the name of God in them. But the later use of this same name to describe God himself in 10:21 demands that this son be identified with God in a very close manner. No other person ever has God's name and God is never called Moses, Abram, David, or Jeremiah, so there must be something very special about this son that causes him to have God's name.

c) The third name is one word in Hebrew, combining two ideas in one concept. It is possible to translate it as an adjective and noun "Everlasting Father" ('ăbî'ad), as a sentence "my father [is] eternal," or as a genitive

phrase “father of eternity.” “Father” is a relatively rare way of describing God in the Hebrew Bible (Deut 32:6; Jer 3:4, 19; Isa 63:16; 64:7; Mal 2:10) and a rarer way of describing a king (1 Sam 24:12), though the Israelites are frequently called God’s sons (Exod 4:22–23). This tendency may be a conscious attempt to avoid pagan images of the gods giving birth to people. Since fathers were the heads of tribes who wisely led the people, it is a fitting title for a ruler if one wants to avoid some of the negative connotations of kingship. “Everlasting” is a title that does not apply to any human ruler, except that the Davidic promise speaks of one who will rule on the throne of David forever (2 Sam 7:16). Since 9:7 refers to a person ruling forever on the throne of David, the “everlasting father” in 6 must be the same ruler.

d) The last pair, “Prince of Peace” (śar šālôm), is less controversial because every king wanted to bring peace and prosperity to his subjects. Peace implies an end of war and is reminiscent of the ideal peace described in the kingdom of God in 2:4. It is also comparable to the promise in the Davidic covenant that God’s people will not be oppressed again and that they will have rest from their enemies (2 Sam 7:10–11). No specific examples or illustrations of this peace are included (as in 2:4). In 11:6–9 this ideal is discussed in more detail.¹

¹ Smith, G. V. (2007). [Isaiah 1–39](#). (E. R. Clendenen, Ed.) (pp. 239–242). Nashville: B & H Publishing Group.