

HOPE OF FUTURE PAST

Discussion Notes

Read Isaiah 9:1-7 together.

This is a remarkable passage. Written around 700BC, we've discovered copies of this prophetic word that have been carbon dated to around 200 years before the birth of Christ. All the more remarkable that it foretells a Messiah who would bring honour to Galilee, especially Nazareth (in the land of Zebulun) and then Capernaum (the land of Naphtali) - parts of Israel that had just suffered catastrophic invasion and deportation.

- Do you find it encouraging that passages like this so accurately predict details about the life of Jesus, hundreds of years before he came?
- Isaiah's prophecy jumps around in time, describing things as future, present and already past - all at the same time. Why do you think this is? What does it tell us about the nature of God's promises?
- The promise of the Messiah saving people from darkness was fulfilled long after the people that first heard it died. What does this tell us about the nature of God's plans for the world? Do you find it encouraging or discouraging?
- The names given to the coming King were both human (counsellor, god, father, prince) and divine (counsellor of supernatural wonders, almighty God, father of eternity, prince of lasting shalom). Why do you think nobody anticipated that the Messiah would be both human and divine? Why were Jesus' claims so shocking and offensive to his people?
- Advent isn't just about looking forward to Christmas. It's concerned with the fulfilment of all that Jesus came to initiate on earth - a Kingdom of peace and justice without end. How can we use this season to share the good news of the once and coming King?
- What part can we play in bringing the Kingdom of the Messiah into our world?

BIG IDEA: Isaiah's prophecy gives us confidence from what's been fulfilled in the past, hope for what's promised in the future and a message and Kingdom to work for in the present.

Break into smaller groups, if necessary, and talk about how you can use this time of Christmas to share the good news with friends. Who will we be inviting to Metro Carols on Sunday? Take time to pray for receptivity in them and for courage and opportunities for us.

Take time to pray for the work of InHope over Christmas as they offer practical love, care and support to the most vulnerable and marginalised, the homeless and women in need of shelter.