

Chat with the Children

- What kind of things need done to get ready for Christmas:
 - looking for buying presents, wrapping them, sending cards, decorating the house, putting up a tree, preparing food, etc, etc!!
 - What kind of things do you think God did to get ready for the first Christmas?
 - anything of Christmas story...
 - particularly the prophecies etc in the Old Testament...
 - Christmas was the beginning of God's rescue plan for people, so we could become his friends:
 - dead important!
 - so he made sure we would be able to understand what Christmas was all about...
 - the prophecies beforehand were one part of that preparation
 - Important that we understand how much it mattered to God that we would understand Jesus' coming!
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Introduction

- What's the furthest ahead event in your diary?
 - because some things for me are fixed, I can go a long way ahead for Christmas and Easter!
 - but I have got a meeting provisionally scheduled for 22nd February 2011!!
 - there's not a lot we plan beyond a couple of years...
 - though perhaps with some educational courses or careers we might have a good idea what we'll be doing in, say, three or four years time...
- Some tasks that human beings have embarked on might take longer than that:
 - building a motorway, or planning a high speed rail link, or a new runway at an airport, is a long-term thing!
 - and even those kinds of projects pale into insignificance with some stuff our ancestors achieved, like some of the great cathedrals of Europe whose construction lasted more than 100 years...
 - a chief architect at the end of the project implementing the vision of someone who has been dead perhaps 50 years!
- In those cases, the big vision may have remained basically the same, but the details had to be entrusted to one's successors
- God had a big plan, a grand purpose:
 - to save mankind
 - but he embarked on preparing for that salvation much, much longer ago than any human enterprise!
 - there are hints in the earliest chapters of the Bible
 - *I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.* (to Abraham, Genesis 12:3)
 - and the Old Testament consistently paints a picture of anticipation for the coming Saviour, fills in the depth of our human need
 - and the passages we read from Isaiah are simply illustrative of that general theme...
- **God had a plan!**
- Want to look, then, at these two passages and just make some observations about God's preparation, before coming back to what all this implies for us

The Virgin will be with child (7:14)

- Layers of meaning:
 - immediate meaning and application to Ahaz's day
 - but also a sign of a bigger intervention on God's part...
- Virgin sign of God's involvement:
 - in sense of prophecy, planning ahead
 - in sense of miracle of such a conception

To us a child is born (9:6)

- Here is a more extended prophecy of God's future intervention:
 - focused round a series of reversals...
 - nation currently in darkness of impending exile...
 - situation round Jesus' birth of darkness from Roman rule...
 - wider situation of people cut off from the light of God's presence...
- Prophecy of this being reversed, of increase...

How?

- A child being born! (v.6)
 - child - government!
 - child - wonderful counsellor... mighty God!... Everlasting Father... Prince of Peace!!!
 - son of David (pinnacle of Jewish national life, and in some ways closeness to God)
 - accomplished by God
 - [Note: Zebulun and Naphtali were tribes whose "homelands" were in what we know of as Galilee, in north of Israel \(map\)](#)
 - reversal of fortunes...
- All details fulfilled in Jesus, pointing towards God's planning for a Saviour, who would ultimately rule for good (in both senses!)

God was Ready: Are We?

- God had important plan, to offer salvation to the world
 - he made sure everything was in place
 - he made sure there was every opportunity and expectation of the Saviour's coming
- The party is ready, the invitation has been offered:
 - are we ready?
 - will we respond?
 - will we get ready for Jesus' coming into our lives and situations today?