

## The Promise

As we continue our Advent series, we recall that we started by looking at the thought, plan, and love with which God crafted the earth. God made a beautiful world for us and provided us with everything we need to live and enjoy the world as He made it.

Last week, we see that sin entered the world as Satan caused Adam and Eve to question God. We learned that Satan had been created by God and Satan's pride led him to rebel against God. Satan was expelled from heaven. This fallen angel had brought about separation between God and His creation-man.

There is a pastoral scene found in Genesis the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter that I can picture. It is a scene that I hope to find as reality for me when my time comes to be with God. Look at the 8<sup>th</sup> verse and read: **They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, (Genesis 3:8 NASB)**. Can't you see an afternoon stroll with God in the cool of the afternoon? The beautiful relationship between God and that couple-Adam and Eve is destroyed because of sin.

This brings us to our next logical step as we journey toward the celebration of the coming Messiah. God is holy and just. Because He is holy, sin cannot exist in His presence. Because He is just, the penalty for sin must be paid. We have all heard on many occasions that the penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23). There must be a death to pay the penalty and that death must take place in order to reconcile mankind back to God. God, that loving and providing creator, already had a plan. He begins to unfold this plan as He promises to restore the creation to the original state.

It is interesting to note that the first books written that are a part of the New Testament are Galatians and James. They were written around 49 AD. The scriptures that were available for the people prior to the birth of Jesus would be the Hebrew Bible that we know as the Old Testament. Within the Old Testament, there are over 300 scriptures that point to the reconciliation of mankind to God. This morning we will only consider a few of those scriptures that point toward the promise of restoration.

The first promise of that restoration appears almost immediately after the first sin by mankind. We find it in Genesis 3: 14-15.

**The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."(Genesis 3:14-15 NASB)**

This is the first Messianic prophecy. Sin had just entered the creation and separated man from God. Just a few verses before we read this prophecy, we read about a very pleasant scene.

In this prophecy, we learn that the path back to God will be through the seed of woman. As we hold on to that idea, let's read another promise that is revealed in Isaiah the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol (or the grave) or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well?"**

**Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:10-14 NASB)**

We now have another prophecy. Not only will the path for reconciliation be through woman; it will be through a virgin birth. God will bring about a miraculous birth of a child who will be named Immanuel or God with us.

Malachi tells us that before this Immanuel is born, there will be a messenger:

**“Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 3:1 NASB)**

Here the prophet Malachi clearly predicts that a messenger will prepare the way for the Lord. In the next chapter, we are told that the messenger will be similar to the prophet Elijah. Christ tells us that this prophecy is fulfilled in John the Baptist.

**“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.” (Malachi 4:5-6 NASB)**

Indeed, Christ came to the world to bring good news and not “smite the land with a curse.”

In Isaiah, we read the purpose of John’s ministry. His ministry was to call Israel to repentance and to prepare them for the message of reconciliation that Christ would proclaim.

**A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. “Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley; then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all flesh will see *it* together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Isaiah 40:3-5 NASB)**

John’s mission was to prepare the people for the coming Messiah. He called them to repent and return to God. This promised messenger is another sign that God is preparing to send the Messiah.

There are numerous prophecies that tell us that Christ will be born to the lineage of Abraham, Isaac Jacob and David. Each of these have a clear meaning and are part of promises of God that He made to each of these men.

**Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” (Genesis 12:1-3 NASB)**

Here God promises Abraham that through lineage **all the families of the earth will be blessed.** First we were told that this blessing would be born to a woman. Now we are told that the blessing would be of the family of Abraham.

We find the same promise repeated to Abraham in the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Genesis.

**Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” (Genesis 22:15-18 NASB)**

Yet again, God promises to Abraham: **In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.**

Abraham was the father of Isaac and Isaac had a son named Jacob. In the following passage from the book of Numbers we learn that the promise to Abraham continues on through Jacob.

**“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel” (Numbers 24:17 NASB)**

As time moved forward, the children of Israel demanded a king. The first king was Saul and he did not obey the commands of God so another king was chosen by God. In the following passage, we read God’s instructions to His prophet Samuel:

**“Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (2 Samuel 7:8-13 NASB)**

Clearly, God is promising an everlasting kingdom to the lineage of David. In our Litany of Praise this morning, we used a promise found in Isaiah the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7 NASB)**

We have covered a lot of ground this morning. Let’s recap briefly.

First, we have the promise of God to bring the reconciliation of sinful man a birth to a virgin woman.

Second, we are told that there would be a prophet like Elijah who would prepare the way for this blessing.

Third, we learn that the blessing would be born to the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We also learn that this blessing would be for all nations.

Fourth, we learn that this blessing would be a king to sit on the throne of David.

We will conclude today’s message with one final promise. The promise that reveals where the child of promise will be born. It is found in Micah the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *too* little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.” Therefore, He will give them *up* until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel. And He will arise and shepherd *His flock* in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth. (Micah 5:2-4 NASB)**

All of these things help to point to the birth of the greatest blessing that God ever gave to His creation. Jesus Christ our savior. This is truly a promise of great joy.