

THE PROMISE

THE PROMISE FORETOLD

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For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the Lord of Heaven's Armies will make it happen!
(Isaiah 9:6-7, NLT)

1. The Promise Foretold: To & Through His Ancestors

- a. Adam and Eve. (Genesis 3:15, Romans 16:20)
- b. Abraham. (Genesis 12:1-3, Matthew 1:1, Galatians 3:16)
- c. Jacob. (Numbers 24:17, Matthew 1:2)
- d. Judah. (Genesis 49:10, Matthew 1:2, Revelation 5:5)
- e. David. (2 Samuel 7:16, Isaiah 11:1, 10, Jeremiah 33:15-17, Luke 1:32-33)

God's promises to individuals such as Abraham and David extended far beyond anything they would see in their lifetime. They were not just promises with eternal significance but demonstrated the very glory and wonder of God.

I, Jesus have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne. I am the bright morning star. (Revelation 22:16, NLT)

2. The Promise Foretold: Who He Would Be and Still Is!

- a. "A banner of salvation". (Isaiah 11:10)
- b. "Immanuel". (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23)
- c. One who would "break the yoke of their slavery and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders". (Isaiah 9:4. Also see: Matthew 11:28, Galatians 5:1)
- d. "A great light". (Isaiah 9:2, John 1:5)
- e. "He ... will rule as a king from his throne. He will also serve as priest from this throne". (Zechariah 6:12-13, Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 2:5-6, Revelation 1:6)
- f. "Our righteousness". (Jeremiah 23:6, 1 Corinthians 1:30)
- g. The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord would rest upon him. (Isaiah 69:1-3, Luke 4:17-21)

3. The Promise Foretold: The Purpose in the Details

- a. Born to a virgin. (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23)
- b. Joseph, son of David. (2 Samuel 7:16, Matthew 1:16)
- c. Born in Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2, Matthew 2:1, 4-6)
- d. Out of Egypt. (Hosea 11:1, Matthew 2:15)

4. The (Un)expected Fulfilment

Some waited eagerly for the promise to be fulfilled and recognised the Messiah when they saw him (Simeon and Anna, Luke 2:25-38). Others struggled to believe that Jesus was the Messiah (Luke 4:22; John 1:46; Matthew 13:55).

Joseph's contemporaries hoped for a Messiah who would be a military conqueror, delivering them from Roman thralldom and leading them into the glorious new age promised by the prophets. (Sinclair Ferguson, The Dawn of Redeeming Grace: Daily Devotions for Advent, p.55)

Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey riding on a donkey's colt. (Zechariah 9:9, NLT)

Christ would indeed crush the Roman empire (Daniel 2:44; 7:14), but God was attending to their (and our) spiritual needs and achieving a victory that extended far beyond military or economic success (Revelation 22:3-5).

Do we get discouraged or despondent because God doesn't seem to answer his promises in the way or at the time that we think He should? Do we forget that His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55: 8-9)? Do we spend trying to work God out instead of remembering that God is able to do immeasurably more than we can ever ask, seek or imagine (Ephesians 3:20)?

5. Lessons for Today

1. God never stopped being a God of hope, and he hasn't stopped now. He is still the same God whose desire is to see all men saved (1 Timothy 2:4). He is still the God of redemption, restoration and eternal salvation.
2. God weaves the details of our lives together with precision and eternal purpose. (Matthew 1:17, Psalm 139:16-17)

We sometimes get lost; but God is never lost. We are often confused by our circumstances; God never is. We have doubts about his purposes; God knows what he is doing. His promises never fail. God may seem slow to us, but he is always moving his purposes on at exactly the right speed. God is never late. He is always on time.

(Sinclair Ferguson, The Dawn of Redeeming Grace: Daily Devotions for Advent, p.22)

3. His timing is perfect (Ecclesiastes 3:11). God is not slow in keeping His promises. (2 Peter 3:9)
 - *At the right time, I, the Lord, will make it happen. (Isaiah 60:22)*
4. His promises are still 'yes and Amen!' (2 Corinthians 1:20). He still keeps every promise.
 - *God's way is perfect. All the Lord's promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection. (2 Samuel 22:31)*
 - *For the word of God will never fail. (Luke 1:37)*
5. His word his perfect (Psalm 19:7). Within His word lies incredible beauty, wisdom and treasure, if only we would take the time to search, read and study it.
 - *When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God of Heaven's armies. (Jeremiah 15:16)*

God had and still has an answer for our sin, brokenness and hopelessness. In his wisdom, he planned, promised and sent a Saviour long before we even knew we needed one. What He promised, He fulfilled. No word ever failed. He passionately made it happen. Even in the fulfilment of the promise, God demonstrated his glory and wonder in each detail. Nothing was wasted; nothing was without purpose. Even when it might have looked bleak, and the fulfilment of the promise looked distant, He was (and is still) the God of hope. At Christmas, let's not forget the gift that matters the most: He is still, and always will be, Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.