

Promises, Promises (*Gen 17:15-19, Isa 7:14; 9:1-7; 2 Cor 1:18-22*)

16-Dec-18

We're continuing our *Advent* series of talks

Advent means the "*coming of a very important person*"

That person, of course, is our Lord Jesus - the Son of God

So far in this series:

- We've said that God chose an Anointed One to save the world - that is Jesus - the Messiah, the Christ - God's Chosen Anointed One
- And we said last week that the promise of sending Jesus to fix sin and death in the world - was given by God as early as the first book of the Bible - in Genesis 3:15

So today, we're looking at God's promises that *relate to the birth of Jesus...*

Please have your Bibles turned to Genesis 17 verse 15-19 to begin with

Let's ask for God's help and understanding, before we begin. Let's pray

Intro

We live in a world - where promises are made all the time

(pause)

And then broken...

[PowerPoint 1-Promises broken]

Some examples:

1. Marriages - people promise they will love each other - in sickness and in health - for richer or poorer - in sickness and in health - for better or worse - till death do part - then a year later - they divorce!
2. Politicians make and break promises - John Howard - "*there will never ever be a GST*"; Paul Keating - "*this tax cut is L-A-W - law*"; Julia Gillard - "*there will never be a carbon tax under the government I lead*". Donald Trump - "*we will build a wall to keep out Mexicans*" and so on...
3. People borrow money and say they'll pay it back, but they don't - or they borrow a book or DVD and they never return it - even though they said they would
4. Then there's promises to children - very dodgy ground! It goes something like this

"Dad, can we go to the Pet Shop after we've been to Nan's and buy me a goldfish"

"I guess so, Mary, if we have time"

"But, please, Dad, promise me"

"I'll try, but I'm not going to promise"

"Please, Dad, promise me! Promise me! You have to promise!"

"All right, I promise"

But the stay at Nan's house lasted far longer than Dad thought it would.

"I'm sorry Mary, but the pet shop is probably closed now and there's not enough time - we have to get home for dinner and you have to get to bed - it's school tomorrow; we'll have to do it some other day"

"But you promised!"

"I'm sorry Mary"

A great tantrum occurs!

"But you promised, Dad!"

(pause)

What if God's promises in the Bible were like that?

It wouldn't exactly inspire us with confidence and trust - would it?

Promises

Let's take a look at some of God's promises - related to the birth of Jesus - the Messiah - God's chosen Anointed One

First let's look at the promises to do with *Jesus' Family Line...*

Jesus' Family Line (Genesis 17:15-19)

[PowerPoint 2a-Abraham]

In Genesis 12:3 - about 2000 years before Jesus - God promised the patriarch - Abraham that - *all peoples of the Earth will be blessed through you*

And God reconfirmed that promise in Genesis 22:18

...through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed,

[PowerPoint 2b-fulfilled]

This promise finds its fulfilment in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt 1:1; Romans 9:5) - Jesus is a direct offspring of Abraham - and Jesus is a blessing to all nations. And Jesus is available to any person in any nation - who cares to believe in Him

In our OT reading from Genesis 17:15-19

God promised Abraham's wife, Sarai - who he renames Sarah - that He will bless her with a son. Even though she is 90 years old!

Nothing is impossible for God!

And He also promised that Kings will come from her. Her son, Isaac has a son called Jacob - and Jacob had 12 sons - who become the 12 tribes of Israel - and from these tribes of Israel - they were many kings.

God always keeps His promises!

[PowerPoint 2c-Isaac]

God also told Sarah - in v19 - that He would start an *everlasting covenant* (an everlasting promise not to be broken) with Sarah's son Isaac which would lead to be fulfilled by one of Isaac's descendants to come

And again, God reconfirmed this promise to Sarah in Gen 21:12 *that a descendant of Isaac will fulfil God's promise*

[PowerPoint 2d-fulfilment]

And this promise finds its fulfilment in the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3:34 - where Jesus is said to be *the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham,*

[PowerPoint 2e-David]

God also promised King David (Israel's greatest king) - about 1000 years before the birth of Jesus - in 2 Samuel 7:13 - that *He will establish the throne of King David kingdom forever.*

And this promise finds its fulfilment in Luke 1:32-33

When the angel Gabriel told Jesus' mother Mary:

[PowerPoint 2f-fulfilment]

"The Lord God will give Jesus the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end"

Now let's look at God's promises to do with the **details of Jesus' Birth**

Details of Jesus' Birth (Micah 5:2; Isa 7:14)

The OT contains some specific promises concerning the details of Jesus' birth
Over 700 years before Jesus' birth - the prophet, Micah, in Micah 5:2 says
this:

[PowerPoint 3a-Bethlehem]

*"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times."*

So, the prophet Micah foretold the actual town of Jesus' birth

[PowerPoint 3b-fulfilment]

This find its fulfilment in Luke 2:4-6 - when Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem to register for the Roman census and whilst they were in Bethlehem, baby Jesus was born!

Not only was the birthplace of Jesus predicted

But the prophet Isaiah - again over 700 years before Jesus - prophesied that a virgin will give birth

[PowerPoint 3c-Virgin]

Isaiah 7:14 says:

Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Now this is nothing short of a miracle - a virgin cannot have a child

And this baby - will be a son - and have the title - Immanuel - which means "God with us"

[PowerPoint 3d-fulfilment]

This finds its fulfilment in Matthew 1:22-23 and Luke 1:26-31

Where God's Holy Spirit places - God's Son in the womb of the virgin Mary

And the angel announces that the baby's title will be Immanuel - God with us.

The virgin birth is significant - in that it means the baby is from God - and not from a human father - and so the baby does not inherit any sin - like any other baby human being would do

And the title Immanuel is significant in that it shows - God Himself has stepped into human history to save the world from sin - this baby is God himself in human form!

What Jesus' Birth means (Isa 9:1-7)

Now let's look at God's promises to do with *what Jesus' birth means...*

That's where our OT reading from Isaiah 9 - verses 1 to 7 come in

[Please turn with me to Isaiah 9]

Again, it's over 700 years before Jesus is born

In verse 2 - prophet Isaiah says:

[PowerPoint 4a-light]

People walking in darkness have seen a great light

This finds its fulfilment in Jesus

He is the light of the world (John 8:12) and He calls people out of the darkness of their sin - into His light which exposes their dark sin (1 Peter 2:9)

[PowerPoint 4b-fulfilled]

In verse 4 - prophet Isaiah says:

[PowerPoint 4c-yoke]

you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders,

This too finds its fulfilment in Jesus - when Jesus says in Matt 11:28-30:

[PowerPoint 4d-fulfilled]

²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

People in Jesus' day were burdened by the weight of the Law and all the extra rules the Jewish leaders had come up with

What Jesus wants people to do is to be yoked or attached to Him - let Him take our weariness and our burdens, so we can rest - and let us learn from Him.

Then in verse 6 - prophet Isaiah says:

[PowerPoint 5a-child]

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.

And he will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

[PowerPoint 5b-fulfilled]

Jesus fulfilled all of this:

- The child is born - finds its fulfilment in Luke 2:11 when Mary gives birth to Jesus, the Saviour and Messiah
- A son is given - finds its fulfilment in that God loved the world so much He gave His only Son (John 3:16)
- The government will be on His shoulders - finds its fulfilment in Matt 28:18 - when Jesus says that all authority in Heaven and earth has been given to Him
- Wonderful counsellor - find its fulfilment in that Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit as a counsellor and helper (John 14:26)
- Mighty God - finds its fulfilment in John 20:28 when doubting Thomas said to Jesus "*My Lord and my God*"
- Everlasting Father - finds its fulfilment in John 14:9 - when Jesus said to Philip - "*Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*"
- Prince of Peace - finds it's fulfilment in Luke 2:14 - when the choir of angels sing to the shepherds about Jesus' birth and declared that peace

had come to the Earth - Jesus brings peace between God and human beings - by fixing the broken relationship between God and human beings

Then in verse 7 - prophet Isaiah says:

[PowerPoint 5c-govern]

Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

[PowerPoint 5d-fulfilled]

At Jesus' birth it was declared He would reign forever (Luke 1:33 and John 12:34)

Conclusion about God's Promises (2 Cor 1:18-22)

So, what can we conclude from these promises related to Jesus' birth?

The Apostle Paul helps us - in our NT reading from 2 Cor 1:18-22

[Please turn there now]

[PowerPoint 6a-v18]

V18 - Paul's conclusion is the message of God is a reliable message - because God is faithful [he doesn't break promises like us - Ps 145:13b] - the Gospel message is not a "maybe" or a "Yes and No" message - (like Vicar of Dibley - like footballers)

[PowerPoint 6b-v19]

V19 - When the message of Jesus is preached - it's not vague or wishy washy, on again - off again waffling. It's a resounding Yes - and certain

[PowerPoint 6c-v20]

V20 - Then Paul makes a bold claim - that All God's promises - no matter how many promises God makes - God says YES, they are all true and find their fulfillment in JESUS!

So, people can say AMEN to God's promises

Amen means: so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled.

Using Amen, was a custom, which passed on from the Jewish synagogues to the Christian churches - that when someone read or prayed or preached - the people listening responded Amen, and thus made the substance of what was said their own - they agreed what was said was all true!

So - we can say today - AMEN - to the truth that all God's Promises are fulfilled in Jesus!

[PowerPoint 6c-v21]

V21-22 - And Paul says that God even helps us stand firm in the truth that Jesus is the fulfilment of all of God's promises - by setting a seal of ownership (like a label on us) - and God puts His Holy Spirit in our hearts - as a deposit - down-payment - layby - but a guaranteed one - that the glory of Heaven is ours!

Challenge

So - if all God's promises are "YES" in Jesus

Let me ask us all a question

How do we read the Bible?

There are **two basic ways** - most people read the Bible.

One way, is where we read the Bible and only look for good things to do and bad things to avoid. This leads to what is called "works" theology where we work hard to both - do the good things - and not do the bad things. The hope is that we do enough good and avoid enough bad that God will be pleased with us and accept us. This is called moralism - and is not a Christian way of reading the Bible.

The second way to read the Bible, is a Christ-centred way of reading the Bible where we try to connect the stories, themes, and details to the person and work of Jesus. This leads to what is called "grace" theology where Jesus accomplishes salvation for us by his work - namely His sinless life, His substitutionary death, and His bodily resurrection. Faith in what Jesus has done for us gives us assurance that God accepts us because of Jesus Christ - and not because of who we are. Christ-centred Bible reading is a distinctively Christian way of reading the Bible, and it is the way that Jesus teaches us to read it.

Religious leaders who came to argue with Jesus did not understand the many actions that point to Him in the Old Testament. For example, when a Priest offers a sacrifice for sinners in the Temple, it points to Jesus as our High Priest who offers Himself as a sacrifice for sinners on the cross in His body, which is the Temple of God's perfect presence on the earth. When Jacob saw a ladder come down from heaven with the angels ascending and descending upon it

between heaven and earth, it pointed to Jesus who would come down *from heaven to take us up to heaven.*

There are many Old Testament leadership roles that Jesus fulfils. Priests point to Jesus our *Great High Priest*. Prophets point to Jesus as the *Word of God*. Kings point to Jesus as *King of Kings*. Shepherds point to Jesus as the *Good Shepherd*. Judges point to Jesus as the *Judge of the living and dead*. Teachers point to Jesus as our *Rabbi teacher*.

So, my challenge for us today is:

How do we read the Bible? Do we look for Jesus in every passage?

Let's pray...