

For Unto Us A Child Is Born

Isaiah 9:1-7

Covenant Waterfall, 22 December 2019

Pray

Introduction

Who has experienced broken promises this year? Unfortunate reality of our human existence, people break their promises to us. How about broken promises of Eskom and government to us?! How many times have we been promised that there will be no more load shedding over the past eleven years, with that promise to be broken literally every year!

More personally, broken promises in our relationships can be particularly devastating. Break ups in relationships – family or friends, empty words, divorce, unfaithfulness – can be heart-breaking.

Perhaps you think that even God has broken his promises to you. Death of a loved one, some kind of tragedy, sickness, challenging work, financial circumstances – whatever it is, you feel that God has let you down.

If you feel like this, well you're in good company. This is something of how the whole nation of Israel felt just before the birth of Jesus. They had experienced this for nearly one thousand years! Why hadn't God kept his covenant promises to Israel – that he would be their God and they his people? In their eyes, he was failing them as they had endured exile in Babylon some 500 years before, and now they were suffering under brutal Roman rule. Where was their promised king, the Messiah from God, and where was their eternal kingdom that he would rule over? Where was God?

What we're going to see in this passage is the true hope of the Christmas story: that the covenant promises of God have not failed. God does not break his promises!

- God's Covenant Promise

- The Child of Promise
- The Son of David will reign

A. God's Covenant Promise

To really understand the significance of Christmas, we need to go right back to the beginning. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, all creatures on the earth and his pinnacle of creation – humans. And it was all good! Adam and Eve, our first parents had perfect communion with God in the Garden of Eden. He was their God and they were his people.

Yet that perfection didn't last too long. Instead of obeying God's Word to them, they listened to the words of the serpent – in doing so rebelled against God – committed cosmic treason against their Creator. From that point on all mankind was plunged into sin. Separated from God, alienated from him. Special communion with God gone. Distance between God and man. Result? Rest of OT – and all of human history – tragedy – destruction and death. Reason things are not right today, wars, corruption, broken relationships, mess in our own lives. All fruit of sin.

Yet God didn't leave us in our mess. Right after Adam and Eve fell into sin, God made a promise in Gen 3:15

That one day he would send a seed of the woman, a descendant of Eve, to crush the head of the serpent. One day God would send someone to come and destroy the power of sin and make peace again between God and his people.

The rest of the OT anticipates that day. Throughout the OT we see God restoring his sinful people, the nation of Israel, to himself, and promising them that there would be a day when he would send his Messiah who would fix the mess once and for all. That he would be their God and they his people.

See this in the way God made covenants, or promises with his people in the OT. First with Abraham – father of the Israelite nation (Gen 17) (2000 years before Jesus) – give his people a land of their own where his descendants would dwell in peace, with him as their God.

God kept his promise to them – gave them a land of their own (land of Israel), with a king of their own – king David (1000 years before Christ). David by and large – great king. Israel powerful and rich. God made another covenant with David – his descendants, his son would always reign on the throne over Israel. Kingdom of Israel would be an everlasting glorious kingdom. God would protect them and bless them – he would be their God and they his people.

Initially things go well with Israel after David dies, his son king Solomon rules well. But after he's gone, things go from bad to worse. Evil kings rule over the country – kingdom splits into two – Israel and Judah. Rulers of both kingdoms get into all sorts of horrific sins – immorality, injustices, start worshipping other gods – it's a mess!

Because of all of this, God raises up the armies of Assyria and later Babylon and both Israel and Judah are carried off into exile by these pagan powers.

It is during this time that the prophet Isaiah writes his book of prophecy, some 700 years before Christ. Israel has just been exiled by the Assyrians, and now the Assyrian army is eying out Judah to invade as well. Things are in tatters – country ruined, foreign invaders plundered the country and taken away the people – kingdoms of Israel & Judah broken. Some years later, Judah exiled in Babylon, Temple in Jerusalem destroyed. All hope gone. Plunged into darkness and despair.

What happened to God's covenant promises to Israel here? That they would dwell in peace in their promised land? That a son of David, a messianic king would reign over them in a glorious everlasting kingdom? That God would be their God and they would be his own people? Had God broken his promises to his own people here?

Right in the midst of all this, Isaiah prophesies that these covenant promises of God have not failed. Verse 2 –

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.”

Though darkness covers the land, darkness of sin in people's hearts, though people are hopeless, though everything looks as if it's lost – a light will shine! God will remember the covenants he made with Abraham and David. The promised messianic king, the son of

David, the seed of the woman, shall one day come! Don't lose heart! God will come and dwell with his people! It was these expectations that were rife in Israel just before the birth of Jesus...

B. The Child of Promise, v. 6

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

The very first verse of the NT, Matthew 1:1, opens up with, **“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”**

What's the message, loud and clear here? God's promised Messiah is here! He that Isaiah prophesied about, and the entire OT points to, is here. The covenant promises that God made to Abraham and David have not at all failed. They are being fulfilled in front of our eyes! In what ways? Look at this verse 6 of Isaiah 9:

“For to us a child is born, a son is given...” – 700 years before it happened, Isaiah prophesied that God would fulfil his covenant promises, that a son of David, a Messiah (Anointed One) would reign over Israel. See this promise in 2 Samuel 7:14 and Psalm 2, that this son would be born. Not just any son, but God's own anointed Son (messiah), the promised seed of the woman, who would come to save his people from their sins by crushing the head of the serpent. Galatians 4:4:

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman,

This arrival of God's own Son, Jesus Christ, in the fulness of time is what we celebrate at Christmas. It's what the angels, bursting with excitement declared to the bewildered shepherds out in the field on Christmas eve:

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the

heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

God’s covenant promises of old were finally beginning to be fulfilled at the birth of this baby in a manger! God has drawn near to his people – the Word of God became flesh! Not just any child or any son, but God himself dwelling in human flesh, humbling himself to become man. That’s why Isaiah calls him who was born miraculously of a virgin, “Immanuel” (God with us) in chapter 7:14.

“the government shall be upon his shoulder...” – Unlike the unjust, corrupt and sinful kings of Israel and every other nation on earth, who rule badly and squander the opportunity to lead people in paths of God’s righteous ways, God’s Son will have the government upon his shoulders. Jesus will rule over the whole world in justice and righteousness. He will right all wrongs, fix every mess, destroy corruption and sin once and for all - reign perfectly forever.

Verse climaxes in declaring the name of the messiah in all its glory

“his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace...” – Peoples’ names in the Bible are always a reflection of their character and have prophetic significance. Here we get a glimpse of the significance of Jesus:

Wonderful Counsellor – Heb = extraordinary – there is no one like him, he is unique. Not one among many gods, no he is the unique King of kings and Lord of lords. As counsellor, he is wise, he is the very wisdom of God, he knows the counsel of the Lord from eternity. In Christ we can know him as our counsellor, comforter, receive divine counsel every day as we read his Word, hear his Word preached to us.

Mighty God – he’s not just a good man, a prophet, a leader, or a king, or a divine being among many. but the Messiah is himself Mighty God, the only true God. No other God but him!. Heb = “God the Mighty Warrior”.

Everlasting Father – Not saying that Jesus is God the Father. While we believe in one Triune God, each of the Persons of the Trinity are distinct – not confuse them into each other. Father is Father, Jesus is Jesus etc. Describing Jesus as Everlasting Father? It is pointing to the truth that he is eternal. Jesus didn’t only come into being 2000 years ago as a baby in a manger in Bethlehem. No, he is the eternal Son of God – never a time when he was not, he

is indeed “everlasting”. Calling him “father” is showing us that Jesus has father-like attributes. He loves us his beloved children. He shows providential care to us, is kind and loving toward us.

Prince of Peace – Jesus’ reign is a reign of peace – he has come to bring peace between God and sinners. He's the seed of the woman come to crush the head of the serpent.

We’ve seen that all the mess in the world, mess of nation of Israel, our mess, evils, injustices, corruption – all has its root in sin. Origin of this sin? Garden of Eden – our separation from God. Cause of our rebellion against God, desire to live independently from him. Result – we’ve had no peace. Cut off from God – can never have peace.

But Jesus is the Prince of Peace – the Messiah who has come to save his people from our sins. Make peace between us and God. As Romans 5:1 says,

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Only those of us who trust in the name of the Prince of Peace will ever have peace with God. Why? **“For our sake God made Jesus to be sin, who knew no sin, that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”** 2 Cor 5:21.

Jesus faced the punishment that we deserved for our sins on the cross. Jesus faced God’s wrath instead of us. Defeated power of sin on the cross, crushed the head of the serpent. Because of this, he forgives us our sins, we’re no longer enemies of God, but friends, his own sons – we have peace with God through Christ, our Prince of Peace!

C. The Son of David will Reign, v.7

“Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.”

In this last part of Isaiah’s prophecy of the Messiah, we can see that the promises of the covenant that God made with David begin to be fulfilled. What were they? Son of David will

reign upon the throne forever, and that he will reign over a kingdom that is glorious and eternal. This is what Israel had been waiting for, for all those years and what they were hoping and longing for around the time Jesus was born – a king to overthrow the oppressive Roman rule and restore Israel to a glorious kingdom, like the time of David.

In Luke 1:30-33, the angel Gabriel appears to young Mary in Nazareth, the virgin betrothed to Joseph, of the house of David...

“And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Right here the prophecy of Isaiah 9:7 is beginning to be fulfilled. The promised Messiah is indeed Jesus. While he didn't meet the Jewish expectations of a strong political ruler come to overthrow the Romans – he came as a helpless baby and lived as a humble man on earth - he is nevertheless the promised Son of David, the Son of the Most High. God will give him the throne of David where he will rule over the true Israel forever (Jew and Gentile who believe in Christ, church) and his kingdom will never end! Here this is, fulfilled in Jesus Christ – God has not failed his people!

And it says that the **“zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”** – God will always achieve his sovereign purposes. His promises never fail, nothing can stop him! Though it looked as if these covenant promises would never come to pass. God in the fulness of time made them a reality. He sent his Son to earth just at the right time. He will preserve his chosen, covenant people throughout all the ages. He will be our God and we his people.

So What?

So then, what does this have to do with us? What does the Christmas message mean for us? How does the fact that the baby Jesus born in a manger some 2000 years ago affect us?

What it all screams to us loud and clear, is that the covenant promises of God have not failed!

Maybe you have been questioning where God has been in your life this past year. Where has he been in the tragedies, the disappointments in your life? Where is he in the seeming hopelessness in our country and in our leaders who always seem to never fail to disappoint us?

The great news for us is that because God has been faithful to his covenant promises to Israel – that he sent his promised Messiah, the promised Son of David, the seed of the woman, in the fulness of time – this same God is and will be faithful to us!

Jesus – our Immanuel – God with us – the Prince of Peace who has made peace between us and God by dying the death we deserved on the cross, and living the life we weren't able to live in obedience to God – he is faithful to his promises: Trust in him – know that your sins are forgiven in his name, that he is with us now by his Spirit, and he reigns now upon David's throne at the right hand of God the Father.

Yes there is still trouble in our lives now. We still struggle with sickness, death, tragedies and disappointments. But don't lose heart! God will keep his covenant promises to us. One day when history is brought to a climax, Jesus will return to this earth – not as a baby wrapped in cloths in a manger. But upon the clouds of heaven in all his glory as the majestic true King of the universe. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father. He will establish his kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth, the true Promised Land. Revelation 21:1-4 continues...

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Those of us who have trusted in Christ's name will be with our Immanuel! God's covenant promises to Abraham and David are also covenant promises to us and will eventually be

brought to completion – Jesus will reign forever on the throne in justice and righteousness, and we will finally dwell with our God and we will forever be his people!

Outside of Jesus Christ, none can come to the Father, remain separated from him. Outside of him, there is no life or hope, only the promise of God’s just wrath and punishment for sins.

This Christmas, receive this gift of Jesus Christ himself – only he is the way, the truth and the life. Trust in him, our Wonderful Counsellor and Mighty God, in his perfectly obedient life and in his death on the cross and resurrection on the third day. As 1 Peter 3:18 declares, **“For Christ suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.”**

This covenant promise of God - our gift of salvation, the forgiveness of our sins - can never be lost, or corrode, or stolen. Trust in Christ for the only promise that is true and is eternal.

Amen