



“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for he hath visited and redeemed his people” (Luke 1:68).

God Keeps His Promise

Central Truth: God does not promise anything that He is unable or unwilling to do.

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Topic: Christ: Birth of; Christmas; God: Promises of.

The God we serve is addressed in the Bible as, *“O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments”* (Nehemiah 1:5). Well may He be so addressed, for such a person He is.

There are many qualities of God which might be spoken of in describing Him. It is significant that Nehemiah chose to speak of only five. The ones mentioned are of great importance in understanding Him with whom man has to do. (1) He is of heaven. (2) He is great. (3) He is awe-inspiring. (4) He is faithful. (5) He is merciful. Note that one of the five attributes of God which Nehemiah mentioned is His faithfulness.

Today's study centers in the fact that God is faithful. Its title, “God Keeps His Promise,” underscores that element of faithfulness. The aim of the study is to deepen appreciation for God's faithfulness.

It is particularly important to remember the faithfulness of God at this season of the year. The Christmas season has been set apart to commemorate the birth of Jesus, the only begotten Son of God. (There is no proof that He was born on December 25. It seems appropriate that some day should be observed, and December 25 is the one chosen.) The coming of the Christ of God was in fulfillment of the promise He made centuries, even millennia, ago. The observance of the Christian Christmas is a testimony to the

faithfulness of our God.

I. THE PROMISE

Human history began in an ideal environment with sinless humans busy in work and worship before the Lord (Genesis 2). Human history ends in an ideal environment with sinless humans busy in work and worship before the Lord (Revelation 21, 22). Between that beginning and that end transpired the greatest tragedy and the greatest rescue it is possible to imagine.

Man fell from that high and holy state in which he was created and in which he lived. He became a sinner, cut off from God and doomed to death. God loved the poor fallen human creature and announced a method of salvation for him. That is the promise which runs like a golden thread through all of Scripture.

The promise is a promise of salvation from sin. It is bound up in more than words; it is bound up in a divine person, a veritable God-Man, who bore the nature of both deity and humanity. It is fulfilled in Him whom we call Jesus of Nazareth, the only begotten Son of God.

The first promise of a Savior was given to Adam and Eve in these words, “*And the LORD God said unto the serpent, . . . I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*” (Genesis 3:14, 15). Somewhere, sometime, a son would be born to a woman; He would be the Savior of men.

But where would that son be born? To which woman might He come as a son? God did not say in the original promise. But throughout Bible history, He made it clearer and clearer. The descent of the Savior is traced in the Bible that men might recognize Him when He came. The serious student of the Bible can trace that descent and positively identify Him of whom the Father spoke.

(1) The Savior would come of the family of Shem, a son of Noah. God promised to “ *dwell in the tents of Shem*” (Genesis 9:27).

(2) The Savior would come from among the descendants of Abram, in whom “all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3; 18:17, 18; 22:18).

(3) The Savior would come from among the descendants of Isaac, the special son of Abraham given of God in the old age of his parents (Genesis 17:18, 19; 21:12; 26:1-4).

(4) The Savior would come from among the descendants of Jacob (Genesis 28:1-4, 10-14; Numbers 24:17; Isaiah 49:3-6).

(5) The Savior would come from the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve sons of Jacob (Genesis 49:9, 10; I Chronicles 5:2; Micah 5:2).

(6) The Savior would come from the family of David, of all the families in the tribe of Judah (II Samuel 7:12-17; 23:1-5; Psalm 89:3, 4, 34-37; Isaiah 9:7; 11:10; 55:3, 4; Jeremiah 23:5, 6).

(7) The Savior would come as the son of a virgin woman conceived by supernatural creation rather than natural procreation (Isaiah 7:13,14; 49:1).

(8) The Savior would be born in the city of David, called Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

That is sufficient evidence, isn't it? The Lord seemed to be focusing the microscope that men might know more and more distinctly the marks of the promised Savior. He purposed that men might recognize Him easily and trust Him immediately.

II. THE FULFILLMENT

Solomon bore witness at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem concerning the faithfulness of God. His words are applicable to our circumstances. *“Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant”* (I Kings 8:56). His promises never fail fulfillment.

The promises God made concerning the coming Savior were fulfilled exactly as He said. Look back over the eight specific promises mentioned above and relate them to New Testament references. Then worship before Him who performs every promise He makes.

Remember the first promise was that the Savior would be revealed as a child born to a natural human mother, *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law”* (Galatians 4:4). That woman was named Mary, a young virgin woman who lived in Nazareth of Galilee (Luke 1:26-38). Though she did not know all the why or any of the how, she yielded to the will of God. In due time *“she brought forth her firstborn son; and she called his name JESUS”* (Matthew 1:25).

The Bible makes it very clear that the SON born to Mary was not just another Jewish baby. He was supernaturally conceived by a creative miracle (Luke 1:34, 35) and was only “supposed” to be the son of Joseph (Luke 3:23) though in fact He was not. That is the miracle of the Incarnation. The miracle did not relate to Mary but to her divine child. She bore the human body which was indwelt by God himself.

But what about the details of the descent of the Savior, were those fulfilled in Jesus Christ? Review them!

(1) He came of the family of Shem on both sides of his family tree — naturally through Mary and legally through Joseph (Luke 3:36). Some of the descendants of Shem became the Semitic peoples of whom the Hebrews are a part.

(2) He was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob on both his father's and mother's side of the family (Matthew 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38). It was He of whom God spoke and by whom all the families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham (Galatians 3:15-29).

(3) He came of the tribe of Judah, one of the twelve tribes that descended from the twelve sons of Jacob (Matthew 2:3-6; Luke 3:33; Hebrews 7:14; Revelation 5:5).

(4) He came of the royal line of David, one of the many family lines in the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1:1; 9:27; 21:9; 22:41, 42; Revelation 5:5; 22:16).

(5) He came by the miraculous conception of a virgin mother (Luke 1:26-35). Neither she nor her husband understood that miracle until it was explained to each by an angel of the Lord. They did not argue with it, but accepted it in humble devotion before God.

(6) He came to birth in Bethlehem, the city of David. His parents brought there by a census required unknowingly by a pagan emperor far away in Rome (Matthew 2:1-11; Luke 2:1-7; John 7:40-42).

It happened just as the sovereign God had announced it would. There was not one iota of the promise which was not fully performed. God is faithful! There were other elements of promise which were not reviewed above. They add fullness to the marvel of fulfilled prophecy.

The Old Testament concludes with a forward look to the coming of the Savior. Its promise is, *“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings”* (Malachi 4:2). But that was not all of the promise.

Ancient kings had a herald to go before them to prepare the way for their tour of the kingdom. The roads would be smoothed and the announcement of his coming would be made. Just so, the King or Glory had a messenger to go before Him to prepare for His coming.

The announcement of the messenger is the last promise recorded in the Old Testament. It reads, *“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD”* (Malachi 4:5).

That “Elijah” (meaning, one in the spirit of Elijah) was *“the voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make*

straight in the desert a highway for our God” (Isaiah 40:3; see also Matthew 3:1-3). When people later asked Jesus when Elijah would come, He said Elijah had already come and the people did not recognize him (Matthew 17:10-13).

The Elijah who was to come was none other than the man known in the New Testament as John the Baptist (Matthew 17:13). John was the messenger sent to prepare the way for the coming of the Savior. In Luke 1:68-75 the Scripture speaks concerning the birth and ministry of John the Baptist. His father Zacharias testified of him, *“And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us”* (Luke 1:76-78). God fulfilled His promise concerning the forerunner as well as His promise concerning the Savior.

Someone has said, “All I have seen teaches me to trust God for all I have not seen.” Let us say, “Amen!” God's faithfulness to His promises in time past (particularly the promise concerning the coming of the Savior) proves it is safe to trust Him for all the promises which have not yet been fulfilled.

It is safe to trust God. He promises nothing He is unable or unwilling to do. He promises that which will be to His glory and the good of His people in its performance. There will not fail one single word of all that He has promised. It is safe to trust Him. *“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)”* (Hebrews 10:23).

1. What does Deuteronomy 7:9 add to the study?
2. How is Jesus' birth proof of God's faithfulness to His promises?
3. What was God's first promise of a Savior?
4. How was the Savior traced through human generations?
5. Why did God give such specific identification of the Savior?
6. What promise do you see fulfilled in Galatians 4:4?
7. What do Luke 1:34, 35; 3:23 mean to you?
8. What do you understand about virgin conception and birth?
9. How are Malachi 4:5 and Isaiah 40:3 related to Matthew 3:1-3 and Matthew 1:10-13?
10. How has the study taught you to depend on the faithfulness of God?

