

Promises of Christmas

Luke 1:28-33

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As we celebrate Jesus coming into our world, let's remember the promises made by God through His messenger, the Angel Gabriel when Mary learned she'd be the mother of the Messiah:

I am going to read Luke 1:28-33...

²⁸ *And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"*

²⁹ *But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was.*

³⁰ *Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.*

³¹ *"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.*

³² *"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give 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."*

Let's unpack this passage a bit...

Rejoice – Mary was being blessed to be chosen as the mother of Jesus so she should be thrilled.

Highly favored – Mary was no doubt chosen due to her closeness to God. She was not sinless but she trusted in God to make it possible for her to have life after death.

Blessed – All women of faith between Eve and Mary hoped they would be chosen as the mother of the Messiah... Mary was the one who was chosen!

Troubled – This was new and unexpected; not all news is good news. Particularly to an engaged woman who finds herself with child before she is married back in Mary's day. But an angel of the Lord also appeared to Joseph, Mary's betrothed, to explain to him what was going on with her (Matthew 1:18-25).

The Angel Gabriel also told Mary to *not be afraid* – for some reason, angels were always having to assure people of this when they appeared... so you can imagine that being visited by an angelic being would shake you up a bit...

Let's look at the Seven Promises:

1st promise, *Conceive and Bring forth a Son* – God would miraculously initiate the pregnancy of Mary who was a virgin. This miraculous event was foretold in Isaiah 7:14. In fact, the angel who appeared to Joseph to explain what was going on with Mary quoted that verse to him.

2nd promise, Mary was to *Call her Son Jesus* – the name Jesus means Savior and Jesus did as He was named; He came into our world to be our Savior

3rd promise; *Will be Great* – Certainly Jesus became the greatest man this world has ever known... no other lived a completely selfless life, performed messianic miracles, paid the sin-penalty of His followers, was raised from the dead, and established a spiritual kingdom that is still growing today.

4th promise; *Son of the Highest* – Jesus was recognized as the Son of God (which the Jews understood to mean, same as God). Jesus is our Almighty Creator who took on a human body in order to pay the penalty of our selfishness which the Bible calls sin.

These first four promises relate to the First coming of the Messiah, and thus they have all been fulfilled.

The last three promises Gabriel passed on to Mary have not yet been fulfilled. They relate to the Second Coming of Jesus:

1. *He will be given the throne of David.*
2. *He will reign over the house of Jacob.*
3. *There will be no end to His kingdom.*

These three promises are prophecies of future events. God revealed prophecies to us so that we may know that Scripture is from Him. Only God can declare the end from the beginning.

God also wants us to know about future events so that we may be prepared for them... and it helps us to see that He is in control despite the disturbing course of this world.

1Thes 5:4 - *you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.*

Let's take a more detailed look at each of these three yet unfulfilled promises...

1st: Jesus will be given the throne of David

There is no doubt that Jesus is currently reigning from His heavenly throne over His kingdom, the Church. The "*throne of David*" is not the throne of God... The throne of God is in Heaven, the throne of David is on earth in Jerusalem.

Jesus will occupy the throne of David when He returns to earth to reign from Jerusalem for 1,000 years.

The prophesied rule of the Messiah on earth is called the Millennial Kingdom, because it will last 1,000 years...

- This will be an amazing time when Messiah-Jesus is the undisputed monarch on earth
- And we Church Age followers of Jesus will be with Him! Scripture tells us that Jesus returns for His bride, the church, before He returns to rule on earth. About this, Jesus promised:
John 14:3 – *I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*
- The end of the Church Age will have a spectacular conclusion because all believers both living and dead will be given eternal bodies that will never get sick or die.
- Jesus also promised that His Church Age followers would reign with Him over His creation.
- The Millennial Kingdom will be an amazing time when there will be no war between nations and death, while it will still exist, would be a lot more rare. The Millennial Kingdom will be the utopia longed for by the world. And most of the fallen nature of this world will be removed so that even carnivores become herbivores. Isaiah 65 says that lions will eat straw like an ox. I think of this every time I see one of our cats eating grass... it is a joy to see them getting ready for the Millennial Kingdom.

2nd: Jesus will reign over the house of Jacob

The "*house of Jacob*" is not the Church. This is an Old Testament term for the children of Israel.

Since the cross, God has been working through the church as His representatives on earth. Israel has been set aside in that role until this Age is complete. But that doesn't mean God is done with Israel.

The Bible teaches that the Jews as a nation will accept Jesus as their Messiah during a period of transition between the current Church Age and the coming Millennial Kingdom. This transition period will last at least seven years and is called the Tribulation, or "*the time of Jacob's trouble*" in Jeremiah 30:7.

The prophet Daniel gave us the time frame for how long God would work through Israel as His representatives on earth. All but 7 of those years were completed when Jesus went to the cross. The remaining 7 years are yet future and will be fulfilled during *the time of Jacob's trouble*.

God promised that when the Messiah returns at the end of that time of transition, the Jewish remnant will be made the foremost nation in the world. And there are strong indications that we are on the very cusp of that time of transition between the Church Age and the Millennial Kingdom.

Some of these indicators include:

- The current COVID pandemic & the world's response to it
- The political division we have today
- The increasing racial conflicts, civil unrest, and governmental mandates
- The world embracing globalism & socialism
- There are multiple signs related to the nation of Israel
- And the fact that there are scoffers in the church that Jesus will even return fulfills Bible prophecy revealing we are at the very end of the Age

A discussion of these prophetic developments often come up in the course of the deep-dive Bible studies we do on Sunday evenings at 6pm. If you are intrigued by what the Bible has to say about our times, you are encouraged to join us.

3rd: There will be no end to Jesus' Kingdom

The current spiritual kingdom of the Church Age will be eclipsed by the physical reality of the coming Millennial Kingdom. Thus, the spiritual kingdom of the Church Age will effectively end when we receive our eternal bodies.

1 Cor 13:12 – *For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.*

Today we live by faith... when we receive our new, eternal bodies, we will no longer have to live just by faith, we will be able to live by sight.

And the Millennial Kingdom is but a foreshadowing of what it will be like in eternity when there will be no physical death anywhere. But our existence during the Eternal State is not beyond our comprehension. Our eternal existence will not be as dis-embodied spirits in an ethereal spirit-world as many believe. Instead, we will spend eternity in physical bodies that will never get sick, grow old, or die on a new, physical earth that will be significantly more glorious than our current planet which has suffered from the consequences of mankind's sin.

I am looking forward to being one of those who will work with God to oversee His creation during the Millennial Kingdom and beyond into eternity.

My hope this Christmas is that everyone here would also be certain of their life after death...

1 John 5:13 – *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life*

We can have confidence in our eternal destiny because of the promises of God; that we will spend eternity with Him if we trust in His provision: that Jesus paid the penalty for our sin when He died on the cross. But Jesus did not stay in the grave, He rose from the dead in an eternal body like we will be given when He returns for us.

Biblical Christianity is unique from all the world's religions which teach that to have eternal life you must do certain good works to earn God's favor. And with such a mentality, you never quite know you've been good enough. But the Bible says Jesus already did the only work necessary for us to have eternal life when He died for us on the cross. Our eternal life begins when we respond to His provision by believing in Him. That belief in Jesus Christ is crucial. Those who think there must be some other way to spend eternity with their Creator will be sorely disappointed.

I have covered a lot of concepts here today that may be new to you. One of the visions we have for our ministry in this chapel is to go deeper into Scripture to address issues relevant to our turbulent times.

If there is anything I presented this afternoon that you want to better understand, I'd love the opportunity to go over it with you... just let me know and we can set something up.

I'm going to conclude this message with a prayer. And then we are going to observe the Lord's Supper together. As I pray, use this time to reflect on your relationship with Jesus...

- Thank the Father for sending Jesus to pay the penalty for our sins... And ask Him to reveal anything you need to do to be closer to Him
- Thank Him for the promises of Christmas... And tell Him you look forward to seeing the promises of Christmas yet to be fulfilled coming to fruition.

Please bow with me in prayer...