Biblical Prophecies Heralding The Promised Messiah

December 18, 2022

A verse in 2 Peter 1 caught my attention as Pastor Jeremy was teaching through that epistle several years ago.

2 Peter 1:3-4a NLT

3 As we know Jesus better, His divine power gives us everything we need for living a godly life.  He has called us to receive His own glory and goodness!  4 And by that same mighty power, He has given all of His rich and wonderful promises.

I stopped at the word “promises” and tried to list a few.  I embarrassed myself by only listing about four or five!  I started with the rainbow in Genesis 9 given to Noah after the flood, the promise of a Prophet like Moses in Deuteronomy 18, and the promise Jesus made about sending a Comforter (John 14), and His second coming. (I just learned that this event is mentioned 1845 times in the OT and 318 times in the NT). But I knew there were a whole lot more than four or five references to promises.

What is meant by a “promise” of God? I have heard and read that there are about seven thousand such occurrences out of thirty one thousand plus a few more verses of Scripture.   As a very young believer, I fellowshipped with an elderly couple who kept a “promise” box on their kitchen table.  When we had comestibles (breakfast, snacks,, lunch, treats, or dinner), Ralph would pull out a verse and read it for our edification.  I thought he said there were eight hundred verses in the box.  I should have paid more attention to my readings of the Bible right away to identify such verses for myself.

I was talking to Kris McKim once about promises in the Bible, she said she had a Bible with the promises in red print.  I asked her for the first and the last ones.  The first promise listed is a Promise of Provision found in Genesis 1:29, ESV.

29 And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

Later in Genesis 9 the Lord adds meat!

3 Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. And as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. 4 But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

The last promise in the Bible is a Promise of the Second Advent of Christ found in Revelation 22:20, ESV.

20 He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

If you listened carefully, the word “promise” does not appear in either!  I went to Biblegateway.com and searched several versions for the word “promise” and “covenant” and “agreement”. (One of the subordinate definitions of covenant is Biblical promise. “Agreement can be a synonym for covenant.) I generated an interesting table of results.  King James and Revised Standard do not use these words very often: 391 and 577 times, respectively.  Newer translations like the New Century Version (NCV) and Contemporary English Version (CEV) use “promise” and “agreement” way more often: 917 and 941, respectively. I used the New Living Translation mostly with 692 combined uses of these terms. What really surprised me though was the scarcity of “promise”, “covenant”, or “agreement” in any of the Gospel accounts.  Jesus promises the Holy Spirit (John 14) and explains that His blood seals the New Covenant, initiated at the Last Supper (see synoptic Gospels and First Corinthians 11) and previously promised in Jeremiah 31.  So my definition had to be broadened because there are an awful lot of “I will” and “I Am” statements of intention and truth.  I had to get away from the very simple unconditional and conditional aspects of the term. Since the Alpha and Omega already knows the end from the beginning, He knows that His intentions are already fulfilled.  His promises are true because they are complete already.

Humanly speaking we think of a promise either as an unconditional statement of favorable and beneficial intention of a future action, or as a conditional agreement that has a consequence or a favorable result. I asked an elderly brother who is now 98 years old if a promise could be a fact, truth, or prophecy (foretelling) to which he responded: yes! He backed his response up with the dictionary and Scripture. Statements that begin with “I am,”, “I will”, “I shall”, and “I have” fit well within the unconditional group as will be amply demonstrated in our Scripture reading this morning.

“If then” and “when” statements may be conditional at times. For example,

2 Chronicles 7 NIV

14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Other words we need to watch for include oath, vow, pledge, sign, covenant, agreement, blessing and curse …

Since we are in the midst of the Advent season of Christmas, I will focus on the promises for a Messiah heralded in the Old Testament.

The Promised Messiah

Genesis 3 International Children's Bible ICB

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What have you done?”

She answered, “The snake tricked me. So I ate the fruit.”

14 The Lord God said to the snake, “Because you did this, a curse will be put on you. You will be cursed more than any tame animal or wild animal. You will crawl on your stomach, and you will eat dust all the days of your life.
15 I will make you and the woman enemies to each other. Your descendants and her descendants will be enemies. Her child will crush your head. And you will bite his heel.”

We see clearly in verses 14 and 15 the “I will” variety of statement with future intention and consequences.

THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS

The next important promises are found in the story of Abraham concerning the number of his descendants and the land where he lived..

Genesis 12:2-3, 7 NLT

2 I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

7 Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, “I will give this land to your descendants.” …

In verse 7 the word “descendants” is translated as “seed” (referring to only one) in the KJV and “offspring” in the NIV. Remember that in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared that not one iota or dot would pass from the Law: every letter counts (Matthew 5:18)! Paul considers this important when he talks about Abraham and his child in Galatians 3 ESV

16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.

26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

29 And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

In chapter 17 of Genesis verses 1-8, God not only reconfirms the number of descendants and the land of inheritance, but also changes Abram's name to Abraham. These promises also seems somewhat vague, for Abraham had a number of sons through Hagar, through Sarah and through Keturah.

Later revelations again make it clear that the promised blessing would flow out to the world through Abraham's son Isaac. Here is the promise as recorded in Genesis 17:19-21 NLT

19 But God replied, “No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac,  and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant.

21 But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.”

Genesis 18:10-15 records this promised event, and the birth of Isaac is described in Genesis 21:1-7.

Centuries had to pass before God made clear what He meant by the promise that through Abraham all nations of the earth would be blessed.

When Jesus Christ was born, the angel announced that this momentous event was good news that brings great joy to all the people: Today your Savior is born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10-11). Thus the promise of worldwide blessing through Abraham was fulfilled in the Messiah or Anointed One.

Here then is a common feature of the Old Testament prophecies. First, the prediction is given but what is meant by it was not always very plain to those who first heard it. The prediction is then expanded and explained by other prophecies given hundreds of years later as time moved on toward the day of fulfillment, chosen by God in His almighty wisdom and power.

From the first promise of a Savior, the offspring of the woman, the focus narrows to Abraham and his family. It is then narrowed further to the descendants of Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons who founded the twelve tribes of Israel; from these God chose the tribe of Judah to be the Royal tribe. Centuries later, God chose David from the tribe of Judah to be the king and then promised him that one of his descendants would reign on an everlasting throne (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Finally, from the family of David it was foretold that the Savior would be born of a virgin!

The Messiah Will Be Descended From Judah

Genesis 49:10-11 NLT

10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will honor.
11 He ties his foal to a grapevine, the colt of his donkey to a choice vine. He washes his clothes in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.

Genesis 49:11a is reiterated in Zechariah 9:9 which was written more than a millennium later.

49:11b is mentioned in Isaiah 63, which portends His second coming.

Numbers 24:17, 19 ESV

17 … a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel;

19 And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion …

The Messiah Will Be A Prophet Like Moses

Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19 NLT

15 The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him.

18 I will raise up a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites. I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell the people everything I command him. 19 I will personally deal with anyone who will not listen to the messages the prophet proclaims on my behalf.

The Messiah Will Be a Descendant of David

2 Samuel 7:11-12 NLT

11 “‘Furthermore, the Lord declares that he will make a house for you—a dynasty of kings! 12 For when you die and are buried with your ancestors, I will raise up one of your descendants, your own offspring, and I will make his kingdom strong.

**Psalm 89 NLT**

3 The Lord said, “I have made a covenant with David, my chosen servant. I have sworn this oath to him: 4 ‘I will establish your descendants as kings forever; they will sit on your throne from now until eternity.’”
27 I will make him my firstborn son, the mightiest king on earth.
34 No, I will not break my covenant; I will not take back a single word I said.
35 I have sworn an oath to David, and in my holiness I cannot lie:
36 His dynasty will go on forever; his kingdom will endure as the sun.

The Messiah Will Be a Branch from David's Line and Will Be Called A Nazarene

Isaiah 11:1-2 NLT

1 Out of the stump of David's family will grow a shoot—yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. 2 And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

Matthew 2:23 says: So they went and lived in a town called Nazareth. This fulfilled what was spoken by the prophets concerning the Messiah: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

I searched for references in the Old Testament concerning prophetic statements about being a Nazarene and could not uncover even one using the English word “Nazarene.”. A footnote in An article I read pointed out that Branch sounds like Nazarene in Hebrew! Jeremiah 23:5, 31:15, Zechariah 3:8, 6:12 speak of a “Branch of righteousness” who will be a just ruler.

It is good and wise to pray to the Lord for guidance in dividing His Word correctly. A well-known quote in Matthew 2 from Hosea points this out. Matthew 2:14-15 reads That night Joseph left for Egypt with the child and Mary, his mother, 15 and they stayed there until Herod's death. This fulfilled what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: “I called my son out of Egypt.”

Hosea 11:1-2 NLT

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and I called my son out of Egypt. 2 But the more I called to him, the farther he moved from me, offering sacrifices to the images of Baal and burning incense to idols. Just one portion of a verse applies. Isaiah 28:10 talks about “Precept on precept, … line upon line …”. Scrolls have short lines!

The Messiah Will Be Born in Bethlehem

Micah 5:2 NLT

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, whose origins are from the distant past.

The Messiah Will Be Born of a Virgin

Isaiah 7:14 NLT

All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means ‘God is with us’).

9:6-7

6 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 Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 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.

We considered another verse from Isaiah on Wednesday evening during our Bible study time regarding “The Case for Christmas” that may apply to the Virgin Birth: Isaiah 66 ESV

7 “Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son.

The Messiah Will Enter Jerusalem Triumphantly

Zechariah 9:9 NLT

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.

The Messiah Will Suffer with Sinners and Die as a Sin Offering

Isaiah 53:5-8, 12 NCV

5 But he was wounded for the wrong we did; he was crushed for the evil we did. The punishment, which made us well, was given to him, and we are healed because of his wounds.

6 We all have wandered away like sheep; each of us has gone his own way. But the Lord has put on him the punishment for all the evil we have done.

**7** He was beaten down and punished, but he didn't say a word. He was like a lamb being led to be killed. He was quiet, as a sheep is quiet while its wool is being cut; he never opened his mouth.

**8** Men took him away roughly and unfairly. He died without children to continue his family. He was put to death; he was punished for the sins of my people.

**12** For this reason I will make him a great man among people,    and he will share in all things with those who are strong. He willingly gave his life and was treated like a criminal. But he carried away the sins of many people.

The Messiah Will Be Raised from the Dead

Psalm 16 NCV

9b Even my body has hope, 10 because you will not leave me in the grave. You will not let your holy one rot.

Psalm 71:20 NIV

Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore  my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up.

The OT contains other such references in the Psalms and elsewhere to the resurrection of Christ.

The Messiah Will Be A Light to the Nations

Isaiah 42 ESV

6 “… I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations,

Isaiah 49: ESV

6 he says: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

This again reiterates the promise to Abraham about blessing all the families of the earth.

The Messiah Will See His Seed

Isaiah 53:10-11 NLT

But it was the Lord's good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the Lord's good plan will prosper in his hands.
**11**When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

Psalm 40 NLT

7 Then I said, "Here I am, I have come-- it is written about me in the scroll.

8 I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

9 I proclaim righteousness in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, as you know, O LORD.

10 I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly.

Isaiah 61 ESV

1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.

Matthew 10 ESV

32 So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven,

33 but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

Remember, John 3:16 says,

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. This is the Good News of reconciliation and restoration that enables us to enjoy a right relation to our Creator for eternity! Make it your freewill choice and come with a contrite and humble heart, declaring your dependence on Him, confessing your sin and need to Him; use your personal responsibility to turn from your selfish ways and allow His Spirit to renew and transform you from the inside out and pursue His will with all the zeal he bestows upon you. Seek to grow in Him and enjoy His every spiritual blessings!

We have touched on just a very few of His rich and wonderful promises. As you read the Word this coming year in whatever version you are comfortable with, perhaps you will contemplate the meaning of Scripture differently.

**Come Thou Long Expected Jesus**

**Charles Wesley**

Come, thou long expected Jesus,
born to set thy people free;
from our fears and sins release us,
let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
hope of all the earth thou art;
dear desire of every nation,
joy of every longing heart.

Born thy people to deliver,
born a child and yet a King,
born to reign in us forever,
now thy gracious kingdom bring.
By thine own eternal spirit
rule in all our hearts alone;
by thine all sufficient merit,
raise us to thy glorious throne.