

THE PROMISE OF JESUS FULFILLED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The aim of this session is to provide a chronological overview to the New Testament story from the birth of Jesus in the Gospels to the growth and ministry of the church and the renewal of all things in Revelation.

Summary of 'The Promise' (3)

- **Crisis:** At the end of the Judges period, the tribes of Israel were divided and slips into idolatry. *How will God respond* to fulfil his promise to Abraham and Moses if his covenant people were unfaithful?
- **Answer:** God makes a covenant with **David** (cf. 2 Sam. 7; Ps. 89:3-4, 132:11-12). Israel's kings are now God's covenant mediators. As the king represents the people, so his obedience or disobedience will have enormous consequences to God's covenant people.
- **Crisis:** While some of the kings were faithful (cf. 1Ki. 15:11; 20:31), the vast majority after David disobeyed God and 'did evil in the eyes of the LORD' (e.g. 1Ki. 15:3, 26, 34; 16:25, 30). The kingdom is split into two. How then can God fulfil his covenant promise, if his kings fail to keep the covenant?
- **Answer:** God sends his prophets as 'covenant enforcers' to remind the kings and nation of their covenant obligations and its consequences. The prophets also anticipate the coming of a Davidic king to fulfil God's covenant promise (cf. Isa. 9:2-7, 11:1-9; Jer. 23:1-8; Ezek. 34:1-31).
- **Crisis:** The people don't take their warnings seriously. Both the Northern and Southern kingdoms go into exile to Assyria and Babylon, respectively. How then can God fulfil his promise to establish an eternal Davidic kingdom, if both king and nation are exiled?
- **Answer:** God promises a new exodus and new covenant with his people (cf. Jer. 16:14-15, 31:31-34). His people's disobedience will be solved by God writing his laws 'on their hearts.' The problem of sin will be conclusively dealt with and God will be with his people in a special way (cf. Ezek. 36:26-27; Joel 2:28-32).
- **Crisis:** A small remnant returns from the exile to rebuild Jerusalem. But the rebuilt temple was not as impressive as the old. The problem of sin remained. The Davidic king has yet to come. How will God respond to keep his promises to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David now?

FROM THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH TO THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Jesus is the new in the New Covenant (Gospels and Acts)

- God kept all his promises by sending us 'his only begotten Son,' Jesus (1 John 4:9; Gal. 4:4; 2 Cor. 1:20; cf. Matt. 21:33-46/Mark 12:1-12/Luke 20:9-19).
- Jesus is the 'mediator of a new covenant' (Heb. 9:15, 12:24), whose death as the Passover sacrifice makes possible the forgiveness of sins once and for all (cf. Matt. 26:28/Mark 14:24/Luke 22:20; Heb. 9:11-10:18; Ro. 8:3-4).
- Through Jesus, the Holy Spirit is poured out in unrestricted measure to all people so that God's people will have a new intimate knowledge of God (Acts 2:1-36; cf. 2 Cor. 3:7-18; Joel 2:28-32; Jer. 31:31-34). The Spirit is the 'deposit' of God's promised future (2 Cor. 5:5).
- Jesus is the true 'son of David, the son of Abraham' (Matt. 1:1) i.e. the Davidic king who will rule in God's eternal kingdom (cf. Luke 20:41-44; 2 Tim. 2:8; Rev. 22:16) and the seed that will bring blessings to all the nations of the earth (cf. Gal. 3:16-18, 22).
- Jesus is the true Israel, reflecting God's character and obedient to the law (cf. Matt. 2:13-23). Jesus embodies what Israel was meant to be.
- Jesus is the true Adam, who represents mankind before God. Through Adam's disobedience, sin and death came to all people. Through Jesus' obedience, grace, righteousness and life overflow to many (1 Cor. 15:22; cf. Ro. 5:12-21).

The Church is the community of the New Covenant (Acts – Letters)

- Pentecost marks the transition from the Old to New Covenant in Christ where God pours out his Spirit on his people (e.g. Isa. 32:15, 44:3; Ezek. 39:29), reversing the curse at Babel (Acts 2:1-12, cf. Gen. 11:1-9).
- The New Testament church is the true 'Israel of God' (cf. Gal. 6:16; Ro. 9:6). Just as Israel was called to be God's covenant people, so too the church is now the new covenant community (1 Pet. 2:9-10; cf. Matt. 19:28).
- The New Testament church is made up of the believing remnant of Old Testament Israel along with believing Gentiles (cf. Ro. 11; John 15:1-8). This expanded covenant community is united in Christ Jesus (cf. Gal. 3:26-29; Ro. 4:16).
- The New Testament church fulfils what Old Testament Israel was called to be i.e. a witness to the nations (cf. Isa. 49:6; Acts 1:8). The international hope of the Old Testament becomes a reality through the church (Matt. 8:11, 28:19-20; Ro. 1:16; Eph. 2:11-22).

- Life in the New Testament church points towards the future restoration of God's kingdom in its fullness (e.g. John 15:19). By the power of the Holy Spirit, the church models life in the coming age within our present fallen world (e.g. Gal. 5:18-25).

The renewal of all things through the New Covenant (Revelation)

- Jesus' Second Coming will restore his chosen people to renewed bodies in a renewed world (cf. Rev. 21:1-8, 22:1-5; Ro. 8:19-21; 1Cor. 15:35-49).
- The new creation is better than the first i.e. it is perfect and holy, a world without pain, death, or sin and God will be with his people forever. The curse of Adam's sin is utterly destroyed. The life of heaven has come to earth.

EXERCISES

1. Explain in your own words what did the Old Testament people of God looked forward to? What were the 'covenants of the promise' (e.g. Eph. 2:12) that had yet to be fulfilled?
2. Read Luke 1:67-79. What does this teach us about the salvation that comes through Jesus? How is it related to the covenant promises made in the Old Testament (e.g. Gen. 12:1-3; 2 Sam. 7:11-16; and Jer. 31:31-34)?
3. Read Revelation 21:1-8 and 21:22-22:5. What images are used to describe life in the new heaven and new earth when God's covenant promises are completely fulfilled? What are the similarities and differences with life in the Garden of Eden (cf. Gen. 2:4-3:24)?
4. In light of our future destiny in the new creation, how then should we live today?
5. In sixty seconds or less, summarise the good news of Jesus Christ in light of what we have learnt over the last four weeks.

Closing Song: 'Tis Finished! The Messiah Dies by Charles Wesley