



## MONDAY 05 DECEMBER 2016

SERIES: UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN – The Promise of the Messiah

Read: Isaiah 9:6-7 & 2 Timothy 3:15-16

### Plug In...

We've been reading Matthew's Gospel. At the outset, Matthew sets up the story of Jesus as the story of the Messiah (Matthew 1:1). Matthew begins by telling the Christmas story – The Messiah story. To understand the significance of this announcement, or to see it in greater definition, over the next three weeks leading up to Christmas day, let look at the unfolding of God's promise of The Messiah throughout the Old Testament.

2 Timothy 3:15-16 says that the Old Testament (what Paul calls the Holy Scriptures) *is able to make us wise to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ* – that is, Jesus 'The Messiah'. ['Christ' is the Greek word for the Hebrew word 'Messiah'.] This passage says it is worth reading the Old Testament for it guarantees we will become wiser in our knowledge of Jesus and that our life will be changed by knowing these things.

When the Gospel writers assert Jesus as *the* Messiah they assume the reader will understand what that means: what the Messiah looks like, is meant to do, and how he functions in God's plan. We could say that the Old Testament provides the passport photo of the Messiah so that when the Messiah walks through the checkpoint onto world history we see that he matches the passport profile.

For week 1, the rest of this week, we will begin with the roots of that promise as it is developed in the first five books of the Bible – together known as the unit called the *Pentateuch* (or in Hebrew the *Torah*).

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Praise God that He promised the Messiah and fulfilled that promise. Ask God us to see how Jesus fits all the details of the portrait of the Messiah set out in the Old Testament. May this build our worship of Jesus and confirm our trust in God's faithfulness to His promise, thus changing our life.



## TUESDAY 06 DECEMBER 2016

SERIES: UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN – The Promise of the Messiah

Read: Genesis 3:15 & Matthew 1:21

### **Plug In...**

In the context of sin entering the world; plunging humanity and the environment into a terrible state, God gives a promise. The woman will have a male offspring (notice the 'he') who will crush the Serpent's head. [To stand on heads and necks in the Old Testament is a vivid picture of total defeat.]

This promise is not merely predicting a future individual, but states the individual is the *means* by which God will bring His initial plan to fulfilment. That plan: image-bearers who extend the borders of Eden (a temple where God dwelt with mankind) to edges of the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). Achieving this would be ruling. Subduing would be protecting the garden-temple. The literal words of Genesis 2:15 are 'serve' and 'guard' rather than 'work it' and 'take care of it'. More than being a horticulturist or landscaper, these terms are how *priests* are described in the later tabernacle/temple (e.g., Numbers 3:7-8; particularly as they served by teaching God's word and protected through preventing unclean things entering the holy space). Subduing evil would be achieved by obeying the word of God (Genesis 2:15-16). We see the first humans were to be *kingly-priests* extending God's garden-temple to the edges of the earth.

After the first human's failure to kick the Serpent out of the garden through the weapon of obeying God's word, God promises a future "He" who will definitively crush evil under foot. The implication is this "he" guards and protects God's temple from evil and stretches God's kingly rule to the edges of the earth.

The Messiah relates to fulfilling God's plan to bless humanity. It is a promise God will.

### **Chew It Over...**

Christmas day is a flashpoint for a world under stress. Lives are strained at this time. Lots of hurts occur because broken relationships exist – there is enmity in the air. The world still struggles in the terrible state of sin. How will you approach this Christmas understanding what the coming of the Messiah promises? How does this change everyday existence? How will you move beyond the quaint Christmas images we have developed for Christmas time? How can we, *rightly*, make the Nativity scene capture the darkness of the world, the cosmic war, and the crushing victory of the Messiah as we announce the birth of Jesus to our children this Christmas?

### **Prayer Suggestion**

Praise God that He sent the all-powerful Messiah to crush Satan. Ask God to help you rely on God's promise that the Messiah will return for us. Ask for the Holy Spirit that the Messiah sends to remind us of God's word as we continue to struggle against temptation and enmity in the air.



## WEDNESDAY 07 DECEMBER 2016

SERIES: UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN – The Promise of the Messiah

Read: Genesis 9:27 & John 1:1-14

### Plug In...

Verses 27 is similar in circumstance to how the first promise God gave to Adam and Eve came after the Fall at the beginning. Here, God has re-created the world after destroying it with a flood and started again with Noah's family. Next to no time passes and Noah's family break with God. Noah gets drunk. One of Noah's sons, Ham, does something lewd to his father. Like with Adam and Eve, God punishes with a curse but also gives a *promise*. The NIV says, "May God extend Japheth's territory; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem". The original Hebrew text of the second clause is literally: "May *he* live in the tents of Shem". So the question is, who does the 'he' refer to? Japheth or God?

Getting a little technical for a moment, Hebrew will assume the subject of the first clause in the second clause if it is not deliberately inserted. We do the same in English. And, this is what we have here. Most likely God is promising that God *himself* will dwell in the tents of Shem.

[NB: The Shemites later become known by their Greek name, the Semites, which are known to us today as the Semitic-Jews.]

Genesis 9:27 is the promise of which John 1:14 boldly says has come!

## **Chew It Over...**

Think again how the promise of the Messiah, first given in Genesis 3:15, is not just predictions of a man, but the promise of a *means* for God to bring about the garden-temple conditions again, but on an escalated scale (i.e., to the ends of the earth). The promise that God will bless humanity.

The dwelling of God with man is an amazing promise, especially given that it is provided in the context of a humanity still caught up with sin and can't seem to escape its clutches. God promises to dwell with man. How will this be? (Reflect again on start of the Christmas story with Matthew 1:21 & 23).

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Lord we see from the beginning of Genesis that life itself is bound up with your presence. To be without you, to be away from your presence, is death. Thank you that in Jesus the Messiah you made a way for God to dwell again with humanity and we have life! Praise God that we are recipients of your presence – that life has begun again – that we have the deposit of the Holy Spirit, the presence of the Lord Jesus with us forever.



## THURSDAY 08 DECEMBER 2016

SERIES: UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN – The Promise of the Messiah

Read: Genesis 12:1-7

### **Plug In...**

We are tracing the beginning of the promise of the Messiah as it emerges in seed form through the unit of the Old Testament called the Pentateuch (Torah).

God's promise that the blessing of the God's kingdom occurring through an 'offspring' of Adam and Shem gets reiterated. It is restated and expanded upon for one of the families that descend from Shem – Abram (Abraham). The word for 'offspring' is literally 'seed'. It is a collective noun which works in two ways. First, it designates one who represents the group because he is from the group. And second, it designates at the same time all who are part of the group.

Jesus was aware of this when he says to an audience in John 8:56 "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad".

## **Chew It Over...**

The hope of the human race hangs on this promise. There is much trouble in this world, many people are worried and frightened, and there is much to be frightened about. In order to cope this Christmas, people will hang the decoration HOPE (almost superstitiously). But it amounts to wishful thinking if hope is not hung on the promise of the Messiah. Hope that comes from seeing Jesus as the servant God set apart from the line of Adam and Eve (the “He” of Genesis 3:15) that will usher in a new world order, one where evil is definitively crushed and it is possible for mankind to dwell in life with the presence of God (Genesis 9:27) – that is hope which allows you to cope now. This tragic life is bearable and can be lived in the light of that hope.

You and your next-door neighbour, your friends, all of us now have the possibility of being blessed by God through the work this offspring will do (Genesis 12:3). Given that, explore where some everyday conversation might go if you ask people a few questions that have the potential to go deeper: What do you want for this year ahead? What worries you? What do you hope for? How do you cope in light of your worries?

## **Prayer Suggestion**

Pray for courage to risk probing a little deeper with our friends, family, neighbours, teammates, and colleagues. May God encourage us in the Messiah’s mission as He takes these conversations further.



## FRIDAY 09 DECEMBER 2016

SERIES: UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN – The Promise of the Messiah

Read: Genesis 49:8-12 & Numbers 24:15-19

### **Plug In...**

We're exploring the beginning of the promise of a Messiah. God begins promising this in the first five books of the Bible. Remember, the promise of one to come is inextricably linked with the bringing about of God's kingdom plan which will see image-bearers stretching the dwelling place of God and man to the ends of the earth.

In time, Abraham's grandson Jacob says some profound words over his 12 sons. To his son Judah, a future portrait is painted where whereby Judah has crushed the necks of evil enemies; rules all nations; and life is so wonderful. Life is so good you could do the crazy thing of tying a donkey up to prized vine in the vineyard overnight – there is so much abundance, the donkey thrashing about ruining things would not matter (or be noticed) given the copious amounts of produce around.

Again, v.10c, the promise of an individual "*He*" to whom this comprehensive rulership and victory will be given. Expectation is mounting for someone to emerge of whom the government will be upon his shoulders.

[NB: The sceptre is mentioned again when the voodoo-magician Balaam, hired by one of Israel's enemies to curse her. Balaam is flipped by God and blesses Israel and pronounces a curse on his employer. The 'star' – the one from Judah – will crush enemies on

behalf of his people. Balaam sees a 'man' (Numbers 24:17), one in the future, but not present now. Earlier prophecies by Balaam paint the picture of the kingdom tranquillity we desire (see Numbers 24:5-7).]

### **Chew It Over...**

Do you long for this kingdom? Do you long for righteousness and justice that lasts forever? Our world is in the same disarray as Israel's world. We stand in the light of the Messiah having come proclaiming this kingdom is *near*. He's done work to make it possible to be part of it. This tells us where things are going. Is this blueprint of history's trajectory a powerful shaping influence on your life?

### **Prayer Suggestion**

Ask God for His kingdom to come! Ask that God's will be done in your life as it is in heaven. Ask that the work of the Messiah will be applied to you; forgiveness of sins so that you may survive each day as the full expression of the kingdom emerges.



## WEEKEND 10-11 DECEMBER 2016

SERIES: UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN – The Promise of the Messiah

### Read: Deuteronomy 18:15-18

#### **Plug In...**

As Moses came to the end of his life, he spoke of a time when he would not be Israel's leader. However, Israel were to expect and wait for a *prophet* like him to emerge. When he comes, they are to listen to him. A little further on Moses speaks of a future where Israel will abandon God but God will bring them back to him. It will be a redemption out of the foreign nations (an Egypt-like experience again) – see Deuteronomy 30.

This prophet to come is placed in the context of God's promise to bless people through Israel and its Messiah. Moses was the leader of an Israel that had been redeemed – a sign that God had not abandoned His promise (Exodus 3:14-17). This passage taken on its own could refer to an individual separate from the Messiah. Many Jews believed two special future individuals were to come. If we stopped here, that would be a fair enough conclusion. Later it is clear that the prophet to come and the conquering-king of the future are one-and-the-same (e.g., Isaiah 11:2-9 where the king on Zion teaches and judges like the prophet Moses did).

Next week we will see how God's promise to Israel of a Messiah is focussed directly on the line of David. There we'll see in remarkable detail things about Jesus that are only assumed in the Gospels but expected to be grasped.

## **Chew It Over...**

We are called to listen to the Messiah. Faith in the promise is shown by obeying the Prophet's word from God. The opposite of faith is disobedience. The Messiah, Jesus, said in his most famous teaching moment: "everyone who puts these words of mine into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock" (Matthew 7:24).

If you are struggling with disobedience in a particular area, the way back is to think through whether or not you believe the promise of the Messiah conquering all and coming back again.

## **Prayer Suggestion**

May the Holy Spirit build our faith and circumcise our hearts so that we obey the words of Jesus the messianic Prophet. May we each day trust in the promise of the kingdom to be delivered by Jesus Christ, trust his words are for our good.