



MONDAY 12 DECEMBER 2016

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

Read: 1 Samuel 2:1-10 & 2 Samuel 22

Plug In...

A long time after Moses, Israel is now in the Land. Hannah lives there. She's a desperate woman in desperate times. Her problem is she's childless – and she lives in an Israel with deep spiritual problems. God told Israel's leaders to take all the land by removing false religions (i.e., the Canaanites). Instead, Israel left many there and joined in with their practices (the whole book of Judges). Therefore, Israel's enemies overpowered them. Many people like Hannah were tragically caught in this web.

1 & 2 Samuel is one complete unit. The whole text probably couldn't fit on one scroll so they broke it into two (hence 1 & 2 Samuel). Seen as one scroll, there's one complete story with beginning connections seen again at the end. Hannah at the beginning; David at the end. Hannah sees God's little intervention as a picture of God's character and takes the cue: this is the God of promise; the promise of big intervention – and so sings. The song's theme: God is going to intervene for people like Hannah – the LORD promises a king more powerful than current corrupt and arrogant leaders. One that will flush out Israel's enemies, even from the entire earth. See verse 10.

At the end of the big book of Samuel, David – a king over Israel – looks back and sees how God delivered him and all his people – and so sings (2 Samuel 22). The song's theme: God gave him the neck of his enemies; David smote them until they fell under his feet. 2 Samuel 22:51 shows that what God has done for David sketches the victory for future.

Chew It Over...

The many stories in the Old Testament regarding Israel are given to provide handles on what the future will look like. God explains the future by telling a past event and points out the future is *like* that. Only, grander and bigger! All encompassing! If God promises intervention in the future, how can you even begin to imagine it? By looking to the past. Hannah visualised it once God intervened in her life. David could envisage all the earth's enemies defeated now God had showed him Israel's enemies subjugated.

Think from last Christmas to this Christmas. In what way has God intervened in your life? How does this give you a sample of God's victory? What past reality now functions as a minute template to the future God has promised you?

Prayer Suggestion

We need to praise God for intervening on relationships, our jobs, our health, our family, our sin. Pray like Hannah because you see God right in the middle of the little things; He is moving through them, leading us up to His promised big thing! May we no longer believe in 'random'. May we see the story of Jesus' birth as God's intervention guaranteeing our future with Him.



The Lakes

TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER 2016

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

Read: 1 Samuel 2:27-36 & Hebrews 4:14 – 5:10

Plug In...

There's suggestions in the Old Testament that the role of king and priest ideally are combined. Remember, Adam was to rule like a king in the garden, *and* serve like a priest. Israel is to function as a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6). When God revealed himself to Israel they backed away from that calling asking for someone to represent them (Exodus 20:18-21). God nominated Moses, then Moses's brother Aaron to be priests. Aaron had two sons and the priesthood would go through Eleazar, not Ithamar. At the time of Eli, the priesthood was illegitimate (it had switched to Ithamar's line) and sinful in their functions. God says 'enough' and states that Ithamar's line will be removed and "*I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his priestly house (dynasty), and they will minister (lit. 'walk') before my anointed one (Messiah) always*" (v.35).

Let's slow down and making sure we understand which personalities are referenced by each pronoun (e.g., "I" "his" and "they"), for something very interesting emerges.

Verse 35: "I [God] will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I [God] will firmly establish his [the priest] priestly house, and they [the house] will minister before my anointed one always".

Given the same language of *'firmly established'*, *'dynasty'*, and *'always'* is used of David's messianic dynasty (tomorrow's reflection on 2 Samuel 7), the following can be said: God will raise up a faithful priest. God will establish this faithful priest's house. The house will minister before the anointed one (Messiah means anointed one). The anointed one is also the faithful priest and the house will be before him.

Clinching this suggestion is verse 36 which shows other priests bowing down (something you do before royalty) to this faithful priest.

Chew It Over...

Read through Hebrews 4:14 to 5:10. The writer to the Hebrews sees all this connected as he read his Old Testament Bible: the promise of a Messiah ('son of God' – more tomorrow) is also a high priest. Notice the ability of this high priest for us. The application of understanding all this is given in Hebrews 4:16, *"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need"*.

Prayer Suggestion

Whatever you pray today, your voice will indeed enter the throne room of God and be heard. This is all because of Jesus our messianic high priest. Pray across where you need mercy; where you need grace and rest that you have received.



WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER 2016

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

Read: 2 Samuel 7:1-29 & Luke 1:26-56

Plug In...

In the mess of Hannah's Israel, God anoints David and gives a massive promise with everlasting and world-wide effects. Like to Eve, and then to Abraham, the promise is to David's offspring (seed). David sees the promise given to Abraham now given to him.

The kingship of this anointed one from David is described like as tightest relationship a father and son can have. In verse 14, the NIV says "when he does wrong...". The word used for *when* in Hebrew is very flexible and can also mean 'and' or 'if'. If this son does wrong, only then will there be punishment.

Chew It Over...

This father-son description informs the term 'Son of God' used in the New Testament. In the New Testament, Jesus as the *Son of God* denotes him as the Messiah, the king. Before saying anything about the second-person of the Trinity, this is a royal kingly title. Nevertheless, we see Jesus never meets the 'if' clause ("if he does wrong"). How does a human do that? Luke's Gospel begins the answer: by being none other than God himself, the second-person of the Trinity. This is what Christmas is all about. The fulfilment of

the promise to David. Luke's Gospel ends with Jesus, never having done wrong by his father, yet being punished for all of us who have done wrong to our God.

Moses saw God's promise and sang (Deuteronomy 32). Hannah saw God's promise to intervene and sang in prayer (1 Samuel 2). David heard God's promise to intervene and sang in prayer (2 Samuel 7). Mary bore the Son of God, the promised Messiah-King. She sang! The Messiah, Jesus, is your Lord and saviour, he has been mindful of your humble state, his mercy has been extended to you – you must sing this Christmas.

Prayer Suggestion

Let Mary's song inspire your prayer today.



THURSDAY 15 DECEMBER 2016

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

Read: 2 Samuel 23:1-7 & Isaiah 4:2-6

Plug In...

The Branch of the LORD is promised. The Branch comes from two locations. *From* the LORD (the 'of' of verse 2a signals origin). And, *from* the Land (the 'of' of verse 2b is not explicit in the NIV, but it exists). At this point it raises a question: how can this Branch come from both God and from the earth?

The title Branch comes the end of David's life where he reflects in confidence over God's promise to him (2 Samuel 23:1-7). David has seen God initially save him and so is convinced God will deliver on his promise, so says:

Is not my house right [or: established] with God? Has he not made with me an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part? Will he not bring to fruition [lit. cause to branch out] my salvation and grant me my every desire? (2 Samuel 23:5).

The prophets like Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah are speaking to an Israel for whom it looks like the kingdom is dying. Wondering, has God abandoned His promise. They use this image of a branch to announce repeatedly that God's promise of a Davidic Messiah still stands and the Branch will come. The Branch will be king over a people whom God has spared from His judgement through cleansing them (Isaiah 4:3-6).

Chew It Over...

Against this opening of Isaiah (with its woeful backdrop) we have the Messianic branch theme emerge. Let's follow it through Isaiah onto Jesus.

This branch is the only hope left (Isaiah 6:13). Enemies of Judah aim to wipe out the Davidic line setting up their own monarchy. God's promise is at stake. But...God announces the Davidic king with a forever-kingdom will come and be called *Immanuel* [God with us] (Isaiah 7:6, 13-14). Very soon, the Branch/Messiah is described as God himself! (Isaiah 9:6-7) – Woah! In a strange twist, the tree of David will be cut down but a branch will emerge; what looked dead is now a banner of security for all nations (Isaiah 11). Then, a person identified as God's chosen servant *grows up* (Isaiah 42-53 – esp. 53:2). The Servant serves by being cut down then raised up. This servant is spoken of like the Messiah-Branch was in chapter 7:14. This Servant will appear as a light for gentiles as said also in chapter 9 (Isaiah 49:1-6). The cutting down of the servant we learn is in the place of an Israel that deserves to be burnt to a stump; the servant branches out again after making atonement (Isaiah 53:4-6). The Messiah-Branch-Servant does all this on behalf of Israel so they can be the LORD's "branch of His planting" (Isaiah 60:21).

The Hebrew word for branch is: *netzer*. When Jesus started his ministry (a ministry that would see him cut down), Matthew says this fulfilled the prophets: that he would be called a *Nazarene* (Matthew 2:23). Nazarenes took their name from the word 'branch' to claim they were people of the branch – the family of David. Nazareth was also a despised place (Matthew 26:71). Jesus was the despised servant who as the Branch atones for his people and raises up a people who branch out and populate his forever-kingdom.

This is the significance of the line: *unto us a child is born*.

Prayer Suggestion

This is our story and how it came to pass. How it is that we can call the God of everything our *Father*. Speak to Him now.



FRIDAY 16 DECEMBER 2016

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

Read: Jeremiah 23:1-6, Ezekiel 17:22-24 & Daniel 7

Plug In...

The promised Messiah-Branch of David from Isaiah is a thread now pulled through the rest of the prophets. Each adding more clarity to the Messiah portrait.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 – The Messiah is divine (remember the origin of the Branch in Isaiah 4:2 was *from* God). He will be a priest for he *draws near* (Jeremiah 30:21. Cf. Exodus 24:2; Numbers 16:5).

Ezekiel 17:22-24 – People in Judah just saw the current Davidic king carried off to Babylon. God promises He will pluck a shoot, plant it, and it will branch out to a massive kingdom. This is the promise to David; the Branch of the Messiah. Currently the Davidic tree looks felled, yet it will be raised to be larger and vaster than any other tree – birds from everywhere will nest in it.

Daniel 7:13-14 – The pagan king Nebuchadnezzar has a dream of a great tree felled (Daniel 4). Daniel explains to Nebuchadnezzar he's the tree, he's a great king to be toppled. In the context of Daniel, all imposter trees (kingdoms) will be replaced by God's great king. The scene where it happens: the appointment to king is one like a man but one worshipped like God. The fact he has the ultimate forever-kingdom shows he's the promised Messiah. The fact he is worshipped shows he is also God.

Chew It Over...

When Jesus was born, he entered the cosmic spiritual battle where imposter kingdoms and the dark forces controlling waged war against him. However, the Ancient of Days protected Jesus so that he might die for us, conquer evil, atone for sin, so we might have a judgment pronounced in favour of us and possess the kingdom.

With all the cute mangers, do not forget the massive battle Jesus was born into. Mary was told by the angel that a judgement in her favour had been pronounced (Luke 1:28).

Many struggles occur at Christmas time; many find the greatest strain bearing down on them. Amid this, you possess the story which guarantees your weeping and mourning being reversed. Do you take hold of that comfort even now? If you know Jesus, you have been highly favoured too.

Prayer Suggestion

Christmas reminds us that life is not all sweet, but a battle. Pray all kinds of prayers and requests for the Lord's people now – that we be fearless in proclaiming the Messiah has conquered and will return for his saints.



WEEKEND 17-18 DECEMBER 2016

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

Read: Haggai 2:6-9, Zechariah 3:8-9 & Malachi 4:1-6

Plug In...

The Old Testament is broken into three large sections: The Torah (first five books); The Prophets; The Writings. This week we've been looking at the promise of the Messiah in the Prophets. [NB. Next week The Writings.] Books like Joshua and Samuel are Part 1 of the Prophets, called the Former Prophets. Part 2, the Latter Prophets, include Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah. Because they're big books, they're called 'Major Prophets'. Also in the Latter Prophets are smaller books collected as the 'Minor Prophets'. Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi were the last prophetic word to Israel until the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary 400 years later.

Haggai 2:6-9 – God once shook the earth in a small way to redeem Israel from Egypt. Now even though the Israelites have returned from exile to the Land things are not great. Again, God promises to shake the entire heavens and earth and *what is desired by all nations will come*. The word 'desired' is used to describe the Land throughout the Old Testament (e.g., Psalm 106:24). The Land illustrated the kingdom of God. Remember, the Messiah is the means by which all God's kingdom will come about. Other kingdoms will be overturned and God's chosen one will have the seal of all power – God's signet ring (Haggai 2:21-23).

Zechariah 3:8-9 – A vision is given showing that the high-priest will be crowned. Symbolic of things to come. The Branch will come and build the Temple of the LORD (Zechariah 6:9-15). A 'priest' will sit on the throne. The description is given of this kingdom to be

brought in by the Messiah (Zechariah 9:9-17). The kingdom is somehow generated to existence by the Messiah being pierced (Zechariah 12:10-11) and that by God himself (Zechariah 13:7-9).

Malachi 4:2 (last book of the Prophets) – “the Sun of Righteousness will rise up with healing.” The Messiah has been promised as a star to rise (Numbers 24:17); a great light to Israel (Isaiah 9:2); a light to Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6); and Jeremiah described the Messiah as “The LORD our Righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

Chew It Over...

Notice how people keep singing songs when God intervenes. Each intervention promotes the great final intervention God has promised with the coming of His Messiah. You must absorb the song John the Baptist’s father sang when he learned that his son was to be the forerunner – the one announcing the Messiah which Malachi spoke of. He understands that the horn (king) of David, the Messiah, is salvation, the sun is coming up over people who have been living in death.

This message is not too much to explain to our children. Now is the time, let us not short-change them this Christmas. The sun will come up on Christmas morning! Christmas morning isn’t about Santa overnight journey – he’s only good for giving toys that will inevitable break (even if “cool” for a time) – Christmas morning is healing through forgiveness from the promised Messiah with a kingdom that never breaks.

Prayer Suggestion

May our children amongst all the fun, glitter, lollies, and pressies, not be distracted from what is truly “cool” about Christmas.