

THE PROMISES OF GOD

The most wonderful thing about the Bible is that it tells us that God is a loving and forgiving God. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned, God punished them. At the same time he gave them a promise of hope for the future. This was the first of many promises God made to men and women who believed in him. They all tell us how God will provide a way to overcome the effect of sin in our lives. We find the first promise in Genesis 3. God says these words to the serpent.

Genesis 3:15

'And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.'

These words are difficult to understand at first. Sometimes the Bible is like this. God wants us to think about his words carefully and pray about them so that we understand them. We can explain these words like this;

God punished Adam and Eve for their sin. Eve (the woman) realised that the serpent had deceived her. It had changed the truth of God's words into a lie. The offspring, or children, of the serpent are people who act as the serpent did. They oppose God's laws. Jesus called men who opposed him 'serpent's seed'. They were ruled by sin in their lives.

The offspring, or child, of the woman is Jesus. Only one child is mentioned here. Jesus is the only one who had a human mother, Mary, and no human father. He is the Son of God.

Those who opposed Jesus (the serpent's seed) killed him. This is what is meant by 'strike his heel'. It was a small wound because God raised Jesus from the dead. By his death Jesus crushed for ever the power of sin in the lives of men and women who believe in him. This was a mortal wound. It is described as 'crush your head'.

This first promise from God looked forward to the Lord Jesus Christ and the great battle he would win when he defeated sin in his life and death.

Many years after Adam and Eve had died, a man called Abram was born. One day God spoke to him and gave him a great challenge.

Genesis 12:1-3

'The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Abram left the city of Ur, where he lived, and travelled many miles to a land called Canaan. God had chosen him to be the father of the Jewish people. God promised to give them this land for their own. But the promise was not only to him and his descendants; anyone who believed in God and his salvation as Abraham did would share the blessings also.

God made seven promises in total to Abram and during his life God changed his name to Abraham which means 'Father of the faithful'. The last time God spoke to Abraham, he said;

Genesis 22: 15-18

'The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,

I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul tells us that God spoke of one particular descendant of Abraham. He said that 'through your offspring all the earth will be blessed'. God tells us that this is Jesus.

Galatians 3: 13

'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case.

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds", meaning many people, but "and to your seed", meaning one person, who is Christ.'

What a marvellous God we have as our God! From the time sin entered the world, God promised to send his son Jesus. God said that Jesus would take away the result of sin when he died on the cross for all those who believe in him.

Let us look at one more promise God made. This was made to the greatest king of Israel. David was chosen by God to be the king because he was a 'man after God's own heart'. He wanted to please God by following God's laws in his life. Because of this God made him a promise.

2 Samuel 7:12-16

'When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom.

He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.

But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

Your house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever."

God told David that he would have a descendant, to reign over Israel after him. Jesus Christ is that descendant. He will reign for ever. Mary, his mother, was descended from David. However God was his father.

Unlike any other man who has ever lived, Jesus never did wrong. David died and was buried with his fathers. He will be raised from the dead in the future. God told him that when he is raised from the dead, he would have a place in the kingdom of God for ever.

This is the promise which we can share if we believe in God like Abraham and David. We can have a place in God's kingdom when Jesus Christ returns to establish it. In that kingdom we will live for ever.

We can have all the problems of sin in our lives taken away. God promises this to us if we believe the Bible and obey his commandments. We shall learn what they are in future lessons.

Questions

- 1 Name three people who received a promise from God.
- 2 Who is the 'seed of the woman'?
- 3 What does the name Abraham mean?
- 4 Who is the offspring promised to Abraham?
- 5 What will happen to David when Jesus returns to set up God's kingdom?
- 6 How can we share in the kingdom when Jesus returns?