

Heiligman: In Jesus, the awaited Promise arrived

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The Bible begins by simply stating, “In the beginning, God created ... and it was good.” But Satan and sin interfered with God’s plan, severed the fellowship God had with Adam and Eve, and things never have been the same since. Yet in that moment, God partially revealed his plan that one would come to crush the head of the enemy and ultimately defeat sin.



Jim Heiligman So, the wait began, and during this wait, sin was running recklessly like a fugitive on the loose, leaving a path of devastation and destruction behind. God took an inventory of this and grieved that he created mankind.

Generations came and went, and then one day out of the blue, God meets with a meandering Mesopotamian man named Abraham. A promise, recorded in Genesis 12, was given to Abraham during this meeting: “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Old Abraham must have left scratching his head, wondering what this meant and how it would come about. So, he waited.

Eventually, Abraham’s grandson had 12 sons, and these families grew to

become tribes. At night, each tribe would huddle together near the warmth of a campfire and listen to the story of “The Promise.”

With the fire turning to embers and the children tucked in bed, they lie wide-eyed awake whispering and wondering about the things they had heard. And in excitement, they waited.

“What happened?”

But times got hard, and in a set of unexpected circumstances, Abraham’s descendants found themselves slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt. “Some promise. Manufacturing brick in a foreign land. What ever happened to the promise God made so long ago?” they murmured under their breath. And the wait continued.

But God (It’s such a wonderful phrase, isn’t it?) raised up a mighty leader, Moses, to lead them to a land of their own. In time, they united, became organized, and established a kingdom. They named a king to rule over them, and within the first three kingships, the nation of Israel extended its borders, experienced victories on the battle field and was at the height of her power and prosperity. It was the Golden Age, and if there ever was a time for “The Promise” to come true, it seemed to be now. But King Solomon died, nothing much had changed, and “The Promise” that the entire world would be blessed through Abraham had not happened. So, the wait dragged on.

Corruption and idolatry soon thereafter snuck in the back door, and Israel lost their credibility. They had drifted so far from the Lord, they were worshipping the gods of the surrounding cultures. And to make matters worse, their kings and queens were promoting this spiritual deviation. And as they sunk further and further down, eventually they hit rock bottom. They were invaded and taken into captivity. But every now and again, you would hear the faint story being told of “The Promise” made so long ago.

Had God forgotten?

But could it be true? It appeared as though God had forgotten them. They had no voice, no power, no army, no influence, no sway. They didn't shout the orders; they obeyed them. To them "The Promise" sounded like a fairy tale, a figment of the imagination. But even if God actually made this promise, had he forgotten? Did he retract, back out, have a change of heart? Had they gotten so far off track, so far removed from his will and ways, that God changed his mind and now refused to deliver on "The Promise"?

But every now and then, a prophet would show up on the scene and say: "No, it's not a myth. It's not a fable. God actually made the promise, and God is always faithful to his word." In fact, the last prophet to come along and speak to this was Malachi, and he said of God, "My name will be great among the nations" (1:11).

And then nothing—absolutely nothing. No fulfillment of "The Promise," no word from God, not even a peep. It was as if all of heaven closed up. So, the people waited in silence—400 years of waiting, to be exact.

God showed up

But then the God of the universe showed up in a way no one imagined or expected. Without a word of warning, he broke the silence and deployed his messenger with the task of delivering a message to a teenage girl in Nazareth. Her name: Mary. The message: "You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:31-33).

Then to Joseph, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife,

because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sin” (Matthew 1:20-21).

As the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 1:20, “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ.”

The message that finally came at Christmas was God sent his Son into the world to simply save us because he profoundly loves us. The wait is over! God’s plan to defeat Satan and sin has been executed. The long-awaited promise of blessing has arrived. Jesus has come! He is here! He is Immanuel, God with us! Let us therefore celebrate this reality like never before this Christmas season.

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