

Week Two: Promise Made

The coming and birth of Jesus doesn't come all of a sudden out of nowhere. In fact, Ephesians 3:11 says that God had a plan from eternity past that He accomplished in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He did not keep this plan a secret either. We read of it as early as Genesis 3:15. He does not clearly and fully explain His plan at this point, but it is there nonetheless.

God renews this promise several times throughout the Old Testament. Another thing seems to happen as well. The more we read, and the closer we get to the time for the Christ to be born, the more fully and clearly the plan is revealed. We begin to see not just that God will save his people but how He will do it as well. The devotions for the next week are all based on some of these passages where God repeats the promise that He made to rescue His people from the depths of sin. We can rejoice and worship as we read and think about these promises knowing that God was faithful to do what He said He would do!

“Blessed Be the God of Israel”

(sung to the tune of “The Church’s One Foundation”)

Blest be the God of Israel, who comes to set us free,
Who visits and redeems us and grants us liberty.
The prophets spoke of mercy, of freedom and release;
God shall fulfill the promise to bring our people peace.

Now from the house of David a child of grace is given;
A Savior comes among us to raise us up to heaven.
Before him goes the herald, forerunner in the way,
the prophet of salvation, the messenger of day.

Where once were fear and darkness the sun begins to rise,
The dawning of forgiveness upon the sinner’s eyes,
To guide the feet of pilgrims along the paths of peace;
O bless our God and Savior with songs that never cease!

Genesis 3:15

Mary Catherine Anderson

As we read last week, Genesis 3 shows us the origin of humanity's struggle to listen to the voice of God rather than the serpent. After Adam and Eve give in to the temptation to eat the fruit of the tree, they are left exposed and ashamed, fearful and hiding from the Lord who lovingly created all things for them to enjoy.

As a parent, this passage resonates so strongly with me. How many times have my children disobeyed my instructions that were meant for their good? How often have they tried to hide their sin from me – lying, running to their room, blaming others, trying to minimize or sweep it away?

And then, what must I do as a parent? I can't let them stay hidden and afraid. I also can't ignore their disobedience. Just as the Lord does in the garden, I must seek my children, point out their sin to them, remind them that there are consequences to their actions, and offer grace and forgiveness to restore our relationship. In the same way, the Lord looks for Adam and Eve, finds them, and then issues curse after curse that will plague not only them, but all their earthly offspring.

But look closely here – Adam and Eve aren't the only ones punished. In fact, they aren't even the first ones punished. Before the Lord even begins talking about pain in childbearing or thorns and thistles, He addresses someone else.

The serpent – the crafty, deceitful, ancient enemy – is cursed first and foremost. It is here we see the first glimmer of gospel hope; the first hint that God will not forever leave Adam and Eve and their children to toil in pain and suffering forever; the first whisper that the enemy will be defeated. It is here that we see the first promise made!

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”

It is in this promise of one coming who will crush the head of the serpent that the Lord is able to do what I as a parent will never be able to do. I can correct behavior and discipline for disobedience, but the only hope my children (or any of us!) will ever have in being free from the curse of Adam is by looking to Jesus – the true and better Adam; the serpent crusher; the one who has destroyed the power of the enemy; the one who has defeated sin and death; the one who has finished his work and sits at the right hand of God the Father.

This Advent season, may we point those around us to this glorious hope. May this first promise made help us see the magnificent, gracious, faithful love of God in sending us his Son. May our focus not solely be on the manger, but on the cross, the resurrection, and the eternal reign of our victorious and coming King of Kings and Lord of Lords!