

## THE HOPE OF CHRISTMAS: A Promise Foretold<sup>i</sup> Genesis 3:14-15

### INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Trinity! It is good to see you here today. If you are a guest with us, we want to say a very special welcome to you. I'd love the opportunity to get to know you more. You can help us connect with you by texting the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mount Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you send that keyword, a link will be sent back to you and that will take you to a short form. When you submit that form, it notifies me, and I look forward to following up with you.

Or feel free to swing by our information center located in the fellowship area. There we have a gift we would love to put in your hands as a way of saying thank you for being our guest today. We are thrilled you have chosen to worship with us today.

### SERIES OVERVIEW:

I am so very grateful for Aaron Blankenship and the word he charged our church with last week. God is so good to our church in bringing us people that can preach the Word of God. Aren't you grateful for Aaron?

I want to invite you to take your bibles, now, and turn with me to the very first book in the Bible. Genesis chapter 3 is where we will be today. We are going to examine several verses this morning, but this will be our beginning point.

Today begins a new teaching series that we have entitled, "The Hope of Christmas." We are going to take this Christmas season and look at the hope that is wrapped up in Christmas.

### **ILLUSTRATION: Promise**

Have you ever made a promise you weren't able to keep? I remember when our kids were little, and we tried to bribe them. Any of you parents do this?! No? I'm the only one? But I can remember making crazy promises to our kids if they would get have good behavior. Some of those promises we made thinking there's no way they are going to be able to meet the conditions of that promise. Only to be surprised. And then you're like, uh oh. I didn't really mean that promise. Only having to come through to make good on your promise. Or maybe not even making good on your promise.

Well, God is not like that. When God makes promises they are more than just a promise. They're facts, can be counted on. God cannot lie, that is outside His character. And because His promises can be trusted, it give tremendous hope.

We are going to begin our teaching series, today, by looking at the first Christmas promise. You might be thinking, Christmas is mentioned in Genesis? The Old Testament? Yes!

So, today, as we begin our look at The Hope of Christmas, we do so by looking at a promise foretold. We are going to look at The Promise Made, Misplaced Hope, and then A Future Promise. That will serve as our outline this morning.

### MESSAGE:

Let's begin by looking at...

#### 1) The Promise Made

In the opening scenes of creation, God makes a promise. God promised to provide redemption, salvation. And this has been God's plan from before the beginning of time. It has always been His plan for Jesus to be born and become our atoning, substitutionary sacrifice.

Christmas lies deep in the Old Testament writings. In fact, everything in Jesus' life and ministry was shaped by 2 millennia of predictions.<sup>ii</sup> So, Christmas was in the mind of God long before He even created the world. And the theme of Scripture tells the Christmas story. All of the Old Testament looks forward to the coming of Jesus, and the New Testament reflects back on Jesus. Christmas was planned in eternity past. And because of that truth, hope and peace and blessings are wrapped up in the promise God made, in Christmas.

I want to show us 5 promises made in the Old Testament that pertain to Christmas.<sup>iii</sup> Next week we are going to look at specific prophecies made about Jesus' that were fulfilled in His birth. But today, we are just focusing on the general promise God made about Christmas. The first promise was a...

#### A) Promise Made in the Garden.

The first promise of Christmas God made was spoken in the Garden of Eden. You know the story. God created the heavens and the earth. Then on the 6<sup>th</sup> day God made His most prized creation, mankind. That's Genesis 1.

Then, in Genesis 2, God goes into more detail regarding the creation of Adam. We are told that all of creation was very good with the exception of one thing, that Adam was alone. So, God created Eve. And the two lived in the bliss of the Garden of Eden, the perfection of the Garden.

Then in Genesis 3, we have the fall of man. God had said that Adam and Eve were free to eat any fruit in the Garden except for the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Enter the serpent. Satan, the great adversary, took the form of a serpent and tempted Eve and both Eve and Adam ate of the forbidden fruit. This one event broke God's perfect design and ushered in sin and destruction.

At that point, God came walking through the Garden and held Adam responsible for the breaking of His command. And God dealt out curses in Genesis 3 to the serpent, to Adam, and then to Eve. And in the midst of the curse, God made a promise, the first promise of Christmas.

Let's look at it together. Genesis 3, verses 14 and 15. ***14The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he [being the offspring of the woman] shall bruise your head [or crush the head of the serpent], and you shall bruise his heel."*** Now, most scholars refer to this as being the first messianic prophecy.

Messianic prophecies are the foretelling of a coming Messiah, an anointed one. We know the Messiah to be Jesus. So, Genesis 3 being the first Messianic prophecy is then the first promise of Christmas. It is what is called the proto-evangelion.<sup>iv</sup> Proto meaning first and evangelion meaning good news. The first good news of great joy was God's promise of a Savior made in the Garden of Eden.

Then, in 2,000 B.C., God continued the foretelling of that promise in the...

### **B) Promise Made to Abraham.**

Flip over to Genesis, chapter 22, verses 15-18. This is God speaking to Abraham continuing His promise of a coming Savior, His promise of Christmas. ***15And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven***

***16and said, "By myself I have sworn [I have promised], declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, 18and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."***

This, of course, is the story of Abraham being obedient of offering his promised son as a sacrifice and God provided a substitute. But, in Matthew, chapter 1, we have the genealogy of Jesus. The genealogy begins with Abraham. So, in Genesis 22, God continued the foreshadowing, the foretelling, of a promised Messiah. The promise was made in the Garden and then to Abraham.

Then in 1400 B.C., the promise of Christmas was made again in the...

### **C) Promise Made to Moses.**

Deuteronomy 18:15-18. ***15"The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen – 16just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.'** 17And the Lord said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. 18I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.*

Now, Jesus is referred to in the Scriptures as a prophet, priest and king. And the raising up of a prophet, in the promise made to Moses, is the raising up of the Messiah, Jesus.

The Old Testament is full of what is called typology. A type is a symbol that represents something else. A type in the Old Testament foreshadows a person or thing in the New Testament. Well, Moses is a type of Christ. There are many parallels that Moses and Jesus share in common.

Like Jesus, Moses' life was threatened by the king. In both cases, a decree was issued that first born males be executed. Remember when the 3 wise men visited King Herod at the time of Jesus' birth and they told him about the Christ child, and King Herod ordered the execution of males. Similarities between Moses and Jesus.

Moses was a savior to the Jews by leading them out of bondage in Egypt. Jesus is the Savior that breaks the bondage of sin and death for those who believe. You see the typology at play here. Pointing to the promise of Xmas.

So, we have the promise made in the garden, the promise made to Abraham, and the promise made to Moses. Then, in 1,000 B.C., a...

#### D) Promise is Made to David.

In Psalm 89, a reference is made to the promise God gave King David. Verses 3 – 4 of Psalm 89 read, *“**You have said, “I have made a covenant [a promise] with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: “I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.”**”*

Like with Abraham, Jesus’ genealogy is traced through the line of King David. Let’s look at it. Matthew 1:1. *“The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, **the son of David, the son of Abraham.**”* God’s promise of a Savior was that He was to come through the lineage of Abraham and David. And Jesus is just that.

We have seen the promise foretold in the garden, spoken to Abraham, and to Moses and then to David. Then, between 750 B.C. and 430 B.C., the promise of Christmas was spoken through the Prophets.

#### E) Promise Made in the Prophets.

Let’s examine a few of those promises. First, in Jeremiah 31:31, the prophet said, *“**Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.**”* The New Covenant is made through what? The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

Also in Jeremiah, chapter 33, verses 14 and 15 the promise of Christmas continues to be announced. *“**Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. “In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.**”* The word “Branch” is capitalized in my translation. This is in reference to a person, the Messiah, The Lord Jesus. And the fulfillment of the promise is to come through the line of David.

Then in Ezekiel 37, verses 22 and 23. *“**And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and**”*

*they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms. “**They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.**”* God is speaking of a spiritual restoration and redemption. We know that was made possible through Christ.

So, we have surveyed 3,500 years of the foretelling of Christmas in the pages of the Old Testament. And the constant revelation of this brought the people of God hope! But throughout those years, the Jews got off track. And the reason they got off track is because of point number 2...

#### 2) Misplaced Hope.

While God’s people knew very well that deliverance was coming, they had a tendency to shift their hope from God to other things. Let me give you a few examples of how the people of God misplaced their hope.

Abraham misplaced his hope. God had promised him a son, even in his old age. But Abraham began to wonder if God was going to make good on His promise and took matters into his own hands. The result of that was Ishmael, the son he bore not with his wife Sarah, but his servant Hagar. Misplaced hope.

Remember when Moses led the Jews out of Egypt and all the miraculous things they witnessed? The pillars of cloud by day and fire by night, the parting of the Red Sea, Manna from heaven, and water from the rock. Seeing God’s hand in those situations should have sustained the Israelites hope in The Lord. But do you remember when Moses went up on Mt. Sinai?

While Moses was meeting with God and receiving instructions from God, the Israelites down in the valley misplaced their hope. They grew weary of trusting so they turned to other things. They fashioned a golden calf and began to worship it instead of the God that promised them deliverance. Misplaced hope.

Then when the Israelites grew weary of God being their king, they wanted an earthly king to rule over them like the other nations around them. They shifted their hope when they demanded of Samuel an earthly king. Misplaced hope.

From that point on, Israel cycled through periods of time of forgetting God and His laws. They trusted more so in their own abilities and their own ingenuity.

That ultimately resulted in them being taken captive and living in exile in foreign lands for many generations. They misplaced their hope.

Then when the focus returned to the law and the words God spoke through the prophets, they began to believe in a political Messiah. One that would overthrow governments and establish freedom for the Jews once again. They lost track of a spiritual deliverer. They believed so much in a political deliverer that they missed Jesus when He came. They misplaced hope.

We, too, have a tendency to misplace hope. In many ways, in our culture and our day and time, we have shifted where our hope lies. We place hope in our 401ks, in our jobs, in politics, and in our freedoms. Beloved, there is always hope. But hope cannot be found in those things that are fleeting. Hope has a name, and His name is Jesus. Let's not misplace our hope, but instead leverage this Christmas to fill us with hope in knowing that The King of kings and The Lord of lords is on His throne!

We've examined the Promise made and misplaced hope. Now, in the time we have left, let's look at...

### 3) A Future Promise

There is a tension that is presented in the Scriptures. It is the tension of the already, and the not yet. We currently live in that tension. The already being that Jesus has come. He has brought salvation and spiritual restoration. That is done, it is already complete.

But there is also the not yet. God fulfilled the promise He first made in the Garden in the person and work of Jesus Christ. But God has since made another promise, the return of Christ. And the issuing of this promise fills God's people with hope, yet again.

Hebrews 9:28 says, *"<sup>28</sup>so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many [that's the already], will appear a second time [that's the not yet. But look at the hope in the second coming], not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."*

While we enjoy salvation and a personal relationship with Jesus, we still deal with the brokenness of the world. We see it in broken families, broken beliefs, and broken lives. We feel it in sickness, loss, and death. We sense the brokenness of the world in war, violence, and hatred. While we already have

salvation and deliverance from sin, we long for ultimate rescue from the brokenness of the world, don't we?!

But the future promise is that Jesus is coming again. And when He comes, He's not coming as a baby in a manger, He's coming to claim victory. Revelation 21:1-4 paints a picture of the future promise. *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

And then in Revelation 22, verse 20. *<sup>20</sup>He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon."* [To which we say] *Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!* That's our future promise. That is our hope. Anyone longing for that day? The restoration of this broken world. I am.

### CONCLUSION:

Christmas is all about hope. It's all about God fulfilling promises. From the first promise of Christmas echoed in the Garden of Eden, to the birth of Jesus, to the certainty of our future promise, we have hope!

Do you have hope? Have you trusted Jesus as Lord and Savior of our life? If not, you can today. In a moment I'm going to pray, and our elders will make their way to the front. We would love nothing more today than to visit with you about what it means to trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

You might be saying, "What do I say?" Simply come, take us by the hand, and say three words, "I need Jesus." That's it. We would love to visit with you about that.

Perhaps you're here this morning and you would say, "Pastor Chris, I've misplaced my hope. The circumstances of life are weighing me down. I don't have hope." We would love to pray with and over you this morning. Would you allow us to pray with you? You come this morning. Christmas is all about hope. I'm going to pray, let's stand, and let's respond. [PRAY]

## ENDNOTES:

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<sup>i</sup> Works consulted in preparation of this message: Tim Gibson, “*The Promise Foretold*,” Ebenezer Bible Fellowship Church, accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suJqn40KnZs>; J.D. Greear, “*Christmas 2019: Waiting*,” The Summit Church, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/message/waiting--christmas-2019>; Skip Heitzig, “*The Cure for the Curse*,” Calvary Albuquerque, March 3, 2019, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#!/series/28/sermon/247>; John Mahaffey, “*The First Christmas Promise*,” West Highland Church, December 15, 2019, accessed online: <https://www.westhighland.org/sermons/sermon/2019-12-15/the-first-christmas-promise-genesis-315>; Julian Kinkaid, “*The Messianic Hope*,” published by Biblical Studies UK, accessed online: [https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/article\\_messiah.html](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_messiah.html); Pastor Doug Cooper, “*The Promise of Peace*,” Christ Restoration Church December 5, 2021, accessed online: <http://christrestorationchurch.net/home/sermon-overview/the-promise-of-peace/>; John MacArthur, “*The Promises of Redemption, Parts 1 and 2*,” published by Grace to You, accessed online: <https://www.gty.org>.

<sup>ii</sup> Phrasing taken from John Mahaffey’s sermon, “*The First Christmas Promise*,” preached at West Highland Church.

<sup>iii</sup> These five examples were adapted from Tim Gibson’s message, “*The Promise Foretold*,” Ebenezer Bible Fellowship Church.

<sup>iv</sup> Skip Heitzig, “*The Cure for the Curse*,” sermon preached at Calvary Church Albuquerque.