

The promise of Christmas

Pastor Wyley Jenkins

In November 2015, Joy Morales went to the police station in the USA right before Thanksgiving to report the theft of her Government issued ID. They arrested her saying she was a wanted criminal who was trying to get away by pretending to be somebody else. Morales begged for an attorney, but the officials told her to write a letter. Authorities then moved her to Arizona, where officials released her after 49 days in jail, when fingerprints showed they had the wrong woman. Think of the chain of events. They all happened because she could not prove who she was. Well, she finally proved by her fingerprints. Establishing your identity is an important thing. But what if God wanted to prove who he was? There are no fingers to fingerprint. How would he do it? There are many ways he could prove his identity, but he himself gives us the way I am going to talk about today.

In the Book of Isaiah, God speaks to the Israelites saying that they should not make Idols and carry them around. They should not feed them and make offerings to stone statues. God sees all this as evil and really not very smart. They don't know who is the real God. Is it the Idols around them, or is it the God of the Bible? How does God explain himself to the Israelites?

In Isaiah 46:9-10, God says:

“⁹ Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand.’”

God is the only God, and as he says, ***“There is none like me.”*** As if to remind the Israelites of this truth, he gives an example of how these idols are not like him. He says that he is the God ***“declaring the end from the beginning, from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand.’”*** What does it mean to declare the end from the beginning? It means to tell the end of the story before it has happened. Who can tell the end a story from the beginning? Only the writer of the story can assure the ending will turn out. God can tell ***“from ancient times things not yet done.”*** So God is speaking to the

Israelites saying, “What other God can predict what will happen before it happens?” Or for us, “What other God can predict what will happen hundreds and thousand of years before they happen? That is how you can recognize me”, God is saying. “I am the Only God. They can’t tell you what will happen far before it happens because I control it all!” To tell what will happen before it happens is called a prediction. Are predictions really that impressive? Well, there are only two beliefs about the world: Either God guides and decides the future, or everything is an accident. The chances of something happening is called odds. To give you a better idea of odds, here are a few odds you might find interesting:

- **The odds of dating a supermodel is 1 in 88,000**
- **The odds of getting struck by lightning is 1 in 114,195**
- **Odds of dying in an airplane crash — 1 in 205,552**
- **The odds of getting attacked by a shark is 1 in 3,748,067**
- **Odds of winning a 30# lottery — 1 in 290,000,000**
- **The odds of being killed by an object falling from outer space is 1 in 21,000,000,000,000**

There are people who spend all there time working on these kinds of things. As a matter of fact, these mathematicians or probability scientists are a huge reason for the price you and I pay for insurance. They are usually right in their calculations. 2 such probability scientists, Peter W. Stoner and Robert C. Newman, wrote a book entitled *Science Speaks*. In which they say that the odds of Jesus accidentally fulfilling only 8 prophecies are 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. That is 1 with 17 zeros behind it.

Bible scholars debate on the exact number of prophecies he fulfilled, but most say it is around 300 prophecies. If Jesus fulfilling only 8 is 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000, what would it mean to fulfill 300? These numbers are so big, they do not make sense to our minds. So I want to give an example. Imagine that you cover all the land mass of Spain and Portugal with the 2-Euro coins, then you stack the coins 50 cm high. Then you randomly paint one coin red and send one person blindfolded to walk around and then randomly pick up the red coin on their first try. That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. So I say to you what is obvious: Is there another God like our God who knows the end from the beginning?

As we are approaching the Christmas season, I want to talk about a few of the prophecies that are related to the Messiah’s coming.

I once had a teacher give a helpful illustration of this. I will share it with you. In a postal address there is a lot of information from very general to very specific:

- Spain, Province of Madrid, City of Madrid, Calle Hernández de Tejada, 4, Pastor Wyley Jenkins.

The prophecies about Jesus’ coming could also be seen general to specific, like a postal address:

- **Jesus will be born of a woman.** / Genesis 3:15, Galatians 4:4

- **Jesus will be Abraham's descendent.** / Genesis 12:3, Galatians 3:8
- **Jesus will be Judah's descendent.** / Genesis 49:10, Revelation 5:5
- **Jesus will be born in Bethlehem of a small clan within Judah.** / Micah 5:2, Luke 2
- **Jesus will be the descendent of David.** / 2 Samuel 7:16, Isaiah 11:1, Luke 2
- **Jesus will be born of a virgin.** / Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18, Luke 1:34-35
- **Jesus will be born God almighty.** / Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1, 14

So it starts general and gets more and more specific. All showing the glory, and beauty, and wisdom of our great God.

Today, if you will notice, the sermon is not called the prediction of Christmas. The sermon today is called the promise of Christmas. Just for clarification, I do not mean Christmas the commercial holiday or X-mas, as it rightly should be called, because it strips Christ out of Christmas. By Christmas I mean the first coming of Jesus to this world, right? So this is the promise of Christmas, not the prediction of Christmas. For sure all of these prophecies are predictive, but they were more than predictions to the people who first heard them. To the people who were waiting for the coming of Jesus, these prophecies of the coming Savior were hope. They were promises. We don't give our children predictions. We give them promises: "I will be there to pick you up", no "I predict your father will be there to pick you up".

Your heavenly Father gave you the promise of the coming of Jesus for your joy and for your eternal salvation. But he also gave the promise of the coming of Jesus for now. It is a gift from God right now. Because it reminds us of what we need so badly to hear: God always keeps his promises. He never lies. He is always faithful. When we believe in the promises of God, they push away the lies that keep us from all that God has for us. So dear brother and sister, if you are going to believe in God, believe in God. If you are going to be a Christian, then be a Christian. If you are going to celebrate the promises of God this Christmas, then celebrate the promises this Christmas. Here are 3 promises for you today.

Some of you here today live under the cloud of condemnation. You struggle with a sin and think it is unforgivable. Maybe you want to be good enough to be forgiven. Maybe you think that he could forgive all the other times, but this time is too much. Maybe you think your past is too bad for God to forgive. He is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. That is you. Without your works, without an offering, He forgives you and brings you close to him again and again. Receive the forgiveness and cleansing today. You will never battle sin in your own power. Here is your promise:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Some of you come under the cloud of fear. Fear you will lose everything; Fear you will be abandoned; Fear that God does not listen to you or that he does not care about you. Here is your promise: God gave you his best. Do you really think he will not give you other things you may need? If your earthly Father

gave you a new car, would it be too hard for him to buy you a piece of bread? So if your heavenly Father gave you his greatest gift, why would you doubt him to give you other things? Seek him and do his will, but never forget his promises.

“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32)

Some of you are here and you don't know why you even came to church. You were invited, or maybe you have been visiting and something keeps bringing you back. You may think this is an accident, but God is calling to you. He is drawing you. This promise is for you:

“For the Scripture says, ‘Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.’¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ¹³ For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” (Romans 10:11-13)

Discussion questions

1. How does God's predictions give us confidence to trust in the word of God?
2. Today, most people do not worship stone idols. But what are the things that pull us away from God like those idols of the past? What are we tempted to love, trust and look to for our sense of security, instead of God?
3. Which promise or promises of the coming Jesus do you like the most?
4. How do the promises of Christmas give us faith and hope to believe God keeps his promises in our lives today?
5. Why do you think God makes promises we have to believe in, instead of just giving us everything all the time without faith?
6. Which promise has been a help to you in your life in the recent past?