

ANTRIM FPC CHURCH BIBLE CLASS

THE OLD TESTAMENT - THE BIBLE JESUS USED

THE PROMISE PRESERVED

15th October 2017

- **The descendants of Jacob are enslaved in Egypt.** A generation of boys are murdered by Pharaoh. God raises up Moses and uses him to deliver His people.
- **The people rebel again at Sinai** and are made to wander in the wilderness for forty years until a full generation are deceased. But God raises up Joshua who leads them into the promised land.
- **The ultimate rebellion** - The nation reject God as their king and want to become like the nations around them. God is merciful and gives them David, but Satan the enemy of the promise huts David and seeks to destroy him. The promise is under threat again, but God is merciful.
- **The kings.** Solomon turns out to be an unfaithful man. God judges Israel for their sin and the kingdom divides.
- **Exile** - God sends the northern kingdom into exile [Assyria], they never return. Judah is next, god is gracious to them, but after repeated rebellions Judah is swallowed up by Babylon for seventy years. Even in exile God does not the people to lose hope. Through Daniel and Ezekiel and then Ezra, Haggai and Malachi he allowed them to hear the message of hope, they return to Jerusalem and begin to rebuild.

What is Old Testament history showing us? This shows us something important; that if the promise is ever to be fulfilled, it will not be owing to man, but will be achieved by the grace of God. How can anyone find the Old Testament boring and irrelevant? It's a gripping history of God's faithfulness and commitment to our salvation.

NOTE CAREFULLY!! HOW THE OLD TESTAMENT FINISHES!

It concludes with the Jews wondering, 'WHEN WILL THE PROMISE FINALLY BE KEPT!' WHEN WILL GOD REVEAL THE MESSIAH? Just before the four hundred years of silence, this is the spirit of expectancy that was amongst the people. Four hundred years later, God speaks and the New Testament begins! He speaks through an angel to a priest, one out of eighteen thousand priests, Zacharias, **'Zacharias, you and your wife, you are going to have a baby!'** Can you imagine the excitement, the shock, not at the announcement of John the Baptist; but at the fact that the wait is over, the promise made is now going to be a promise fulfilled.

One question that often comes up is this, 'How were people in the Old Testament saved?' This is a good question that requires a simple, straightforward answer. The simple answer is this, 'People in the Old Testament were saved in the exact same way as people in the New Testament and people still are today.' I know other questions arise like, 'How can this be the case, because Christ was had not come, He had not died or made an atonement etc?' Surely the Old Testament saints were saved some other way? The answer again is 'NO!' Let us look at a few things:

The hope of Old Testament Saints was in a promise made.

The hope of New Testament Saints was in a promise fulfilled.

In Genesis Ch3:15 God gave a promise, it was the promise of a saviour. The timing of this revelation was at the time of the fall. When Adam sinned and plunged all of humanity into darkness, God mercifully and graciously gave the promise of a messiah, a redeemer/saviour who would come and save a people from the results of Adam's rebellion. It was a promise made yet nobody knew when that promise would be fulfilled. Ever since that time [Gen Ch3:15] people began to look for the fulfilment of that promise.

The sacrificial system could not save anyone, it is important to stress that the sacrificing of an animal was not sufficient to appease and satisfy the wrath and anger of God. Yet through the sacrifices and priesthood God taught Israel that atonement for sins required suffering and bloodshed and that the sacrifice [victim] had to have a relationship to the one offering it. Those who worshipped God through the sacrificial system were not

looking to the sacrifice, they looked by faith beyond the sacrifice and all the intricacies to a promise, a promise of a saviour. People in the Old Testament did not wonder if a saviour would come, they knew that their only hope was in the 'anointed one' typified in the sacrifices. By faith they looked forward to Jesus' coming, the fulfilment of God's promise.

All of the Old Testament saints are in heaven because of Christ and His work, even though Christ had not come, or died and provided a perfect atonement. They were saved by believing what God told them. **Galatians Ch3:6** tells us 'Abraham believed God [had faith God] and it was [reckoned] accounted to him for righteousness.' See also Romans Chs 3-4 They needed a propitiation, appeasement, they needed exactly the same as the New Testament believers. The Old Testament person who put faith [trusted] God's promise was saved, even though that promise had not been fulfilled.

One writer put it this way 'Old Testament believers were saved by a faith that looked forward, while we are saved by a faith that looks backward. The ground of that salvation was the work of Christ that was yet to come. The objective ground for the salvation for both groups is the same—the atonement of Christ.'

Was the gospel preached in the Old Testament?

In Galatians Ch3:8 we read these words, '*And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.*' Abraham was conscious of the 'good news'. Abraham I believe did not have the full revelation of the gospel that we have today. The gospel that Abraham knew was behind the types and shadows of the Old Testament worship system, but it was still the same good news, the same gospel, i.e. that there is no other way to be saved except through the 'slain lamb' Rev 13:8. Jesus spoke these words in John ch8:56, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.' What Abraham saw filled his heart with joy. It does not mean He literally saw Christ or expected Jesus to appear in his lifetime, but he viewed the coming saviour by faith, and he rejoiced!

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the saving of the O.T saints.

'As in the New Testament, salvation in the Old Testament was permanent, requiring the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Old Testament saints were saved, regenerated and justified, and they had faith. Thus, they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In this regard, the Holy Spirit's ministry was the same in the Old Testament as it is now.'

The preservation of the promise.

When reading your bible you should remember that the promise of a saviour is pivotal to understanding the message of the scriptures. When God spoke in **Gen Ch3:15** He said that two things would happen

- i. That Satan would strike at the promise and His people.
- ii. That the promise would be fulfilled no matter what.

The Old testament in its entirety is a record of how this promise from the very beginning was placed in jeopardy again and again, yet God ensured that this promise was secure.

Let us take a quick walk through the Old Testament and pick out major threats to the promise.

- **Cain murders Abel** - the line of the woman—but God preserves that line through Seth.
- **The flood** - almost all the world corrupts itself by sin. God destroys the world but preserves the promise through one man and his family.
- **Abraham** - The promise of a saviour was put in jeopardy by none other than Abraham. He traded the promise for personal safety. He gave his wife, Sarah, away not once but twice. First, to the Pharaoh and then to the King Abimelech. And He fathered a child outside of the covenant of the promise.
- **Rivalry between Jacob and Esau.**
- **The family of Jacob almost die.** A famine challenges the promise of God. Will the family perish and the promise die with them? No, God preserves them.