

Christmas 3:16
The Promise of Christmas
John 3:16

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Introduction of Text: For these weeks leading to Christmas, I have preached on one verse—John 3:16. Someone called it the “Mount Everest of the Scriptures.” I was struck recently with how this one verse communicates to us the message and hope of Christmas. My prayer has been that even though we know this verse, that God would use this one sentence in a powerful way.

Over the last weeks, we have considered the premise of Christmas. We said that the premise of Christmas is identified in the first of the verse, “For God so loved the world.” We simply underscored the idea that Christmas begins with the amazing love of God for us and the whole world. He came out of His love. His amazing love prompted His coming. We have talked about the gift that He gave. We said that He gave us Himself. Because He gave us Himself, He gave us His holiness. Because He gave us His Holiness, He gives us Heaven. Last time we talked about the point of Christmas. He loved us and He came so that we would believe in Him.

Today, I want to talk about the “Promise of Christmas.”

As we have done each of the last two weeks, let’s read this verse together.

Text: ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Ultimately, the story of Christmas ends in a promise—the promise that all of this is so that we have eternal life. To say it a little more emphatically, all of this is so that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ might miss Hell and make Heaven. It is a promise.

But, promises are interesting, aren’t they? Have you ever had a promise broken? Every single one of us has had a promise broken? Some have married with a promise to death do us part, but did not keep that promise. Employers promise. Politicians promise. All of us have faced the harsh reality of a broken promise. We have even broken promises that we have made to ourselves. “I will never do that again,” we tell ourselves, only to let ourselves down.

It’s as though promises are made to be broken. So, when I say to you today the promise of Christmas is eternal life, how do you react? Better yet, how do you know for sure?

I think we find our answer in the character of God. God has a long record of being one who keeps His promises.

Background to the Promise

God has a long record of keeping promises. Among the multitude of examples I could give, let me focus on just a few.

1. God very clearly entered into a covenant with Abraham about the promise of land in a little strip of land now called Israel. Over the scores of years that have passed, there have been numerous threats to the security of that land and at times discipline from God involving that land, but the descendants of Abraham continue to occupy that land.
2. The prophets of the Old Testament prophesied (predicted) that invaders from the North would overtake the land of Israel and send many of the inhabitants of Israel into exile.
3. Another feature that dominates the prophets of the Old Testament is the correct prophesy of the Messiah—details of Jesus' birth, life, and death are all prophesied with accuracy centuries before Jesus' coming.
4. Finally, the Prophet Daniel prophesies the existence of four major kingdoms of the world that would follow from his lifetime to the time of Jesus.

To emphasize even more fully this record of God being a keeper of promises, let's isolate the life of Christ.

- The Birth of Christ is proof that God keeps His promises.

A Messiah was promised in the Old Testament. From Malachi to Jesus, four hundred years had passed. Many a generation had come and gone without seeing the prophecy realized. Maybe some had come to believe that Messiah would not come. But He did. As Paul said in Galatians 4:4, "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman." At the right time, Jesus came.

Sometimes it might not look like God is a keeper of His Word, but when I look at the manger, I am reminded that God always keeps His promises. The shepherds learned this the night of His birth. Luke's Gospel tells us that angels appeared to them while they were out in the fields doing what shepherds do. They are told specific details about what they would find and where to find the Messiah. Then Luke adds this summary word: "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard, *just as they had been told*."

- The Words of Christ give further proof that God keeps His promises.

Jesus prophesied that in three days He would be raised. Jesus promised that after He left, He would not leave His followers as orphans, but that the Holy Spirit would come.

- The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ are ultimate proofs that God keeps His promises.

He defeated death. The promise of eternal life is rooted in the convincing proofs that He is a God who keeps His promises. First Corinthians 15 tells us, "Death, where is your sting! Where is your victory?" We celebrate Christmas and Easter together.

Believing the John 3:16 Promise

Since God has kept His promises in the past, we can look forward to His promise concerning eternity.

So what?

- Choose Life! You have a choice. God sets before us life and death, but tells us to choose life. The context of our verse tells us that there will be those who choose death instead of life, who choose darkness, instead of light. So, we God appeals, and we appeal, "Choose life!"
- Approach Death with Confidence!

God has the final word on death and the final word on life, so as His followers, ought to have great confidence.

Blessed are the dead! Absent from the body, but present with the Lord! These are the words of Christ about death.

David Livingstone, one of the first missionaries, came to a particular area. The chief had been mistreated by some treacherous trader, and had vowed to kill the next foreigner who came to the village. Livingstone, by his fluttering candle, turned to the Bible and read, as always, his evening passage, coming to the *promise*, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the ends of the world" (Matthew 28:20). Closing the Book, he said, "It is the word of a gentleman of the strictest and most sacred honor; I will not flee." He did not flee and was used mightily by God in Central Africa. (*Encyclopedia of Illustrations* #13762).

William Carey said, "Our future is as bright as the promises of God." That's a bright future.