

GOT HOPE?

Waiting for election 2020 to be settled fact? Some people haven't yet gotten over election 2016. Political turmoil was a fact of life 2,000 years ago as well. For some, God's promises of a Savior seemed to become more and more dim with each passing year, let alone era, of the various foreign powers overseeing the land that God had promised to His chosen people.

Maybe you're thinking it's about time for a "savior" in our own time as well. What would this look like for you? God's people forget they are living in the consequences of their decisions.

1- THE PROBLEM - At this "advent" time of year, Christians focus on the "coming" or "arrival" of the promised Christ, the Messiah that God had long said would come to make things right. These promises span thousands of years. They go right back to the garden of Eden.

The personal problems and political predicaments the people faced stem from mankind's rebellion against God, our creator. God placed Adam and Eve as His personal representatives in His creation, instructing them with His word, and charging them to walk in His ways.

But they used their moral ability to choose to disobey God. And every person born since inherits the natural consequence of their representative action, which is spiritual death. As the Bible puts it, "*the wages of sin is death.*" You earn what you get. You sin because you are born a sinner.

But in Genesis 3, the same narrative that describes the fall of mankind, God also promises His remedy: the coming birth of a Deliverer. This promise was renewed many times in the books of the Old Testament. We see it in the lives of Noah, Job, Moses, Abraham, David, and more.

2- THE PREMISE - Mankind chose to disregard God's word and follow their own way. And our ancestors insisted on this course of action despite God's miraculous interventions in their lives.

Noah's descendants, saved in the global judgment flood, soon reverted to sinful ways. Abraham is called the father of faith, because he acted upon his belief in what God had said. But his heirs squander the promises. God even miraculously delivers them from slavery in Egypt.

God brings them into the Promised Land. But they fail to follow His commandments, which simply reflect God's holy character. He desires for His people to be like Him. But God knows all things. He told them they could not obey Him until they had new hearts. And He promised this too. Not only a Deliverer, but His own Spirit within new hearts of His redeemed people.

As they waited, God's people waffled. They wanted their own way, the ways of the world. They forgot God's word. They gave God lip service but their hearts were far from Him. Despite His warnings, their repentance was short-lived and short-sighted. They became slaves again.

3- THE PROMISE - Amidst all this trouble, over thousands of years, God continued to renew His promise of His coming Deliverer. Giving hope! Cryptic messages through the prophets spoke of rest from tyranny and restoration of God's words and ways for His people.

Such are the words of hope spoken by the prophet Isaiah, as in chapter 11. "*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, and His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.*"

Isaiah said a virgin would conceive and bear a son and call His name "Immanuel" which means "God with us." Hundreds of years after affirming His promise, God sent word that it was time. Luke 1:26-38 and Matthew 1:18-25 record how God's Spirit brought hope to fruition.

4- THE PRINCE - Isaiah 9 said of Christ, prince of peace, "*of the increase of His government and of peace, there will be no end.*" Just as God promised, Jesus Christ alone gives peace with God, new spiritual life, eternally. And this true liberty forms the basis of the American republic, forged by Pilgrims and founded by Framers on principles of Scripture. But will it survive?

"This is not simply another 4-year election. This is a crossroads in the history of our civilization that will determine whether or not we the people reclaim control over our government." Will President Trump's words play out to make the hope of 2020 a truly "Merry Christmas"? God knows! And His people will never stop working to make God's hope real for all people! □