

Anyone who has ever assembled a puzzle knows that if you don't have all the pieces it is impossible to put the puzzle together. Even if you do have all the pieces, if you don't know what the finished puzzle looks like it will take a lot longer and be a lot more frustrating than if you have the box with the picture on it. Most of us have only pieces of God's story. We know certain Bible stories and events but we lack the big picture. For example, you may know all about Daniel and the lion's den but why is he in the Bible? How does he fit in God's story?

We have been looking at the Bible from a 50,000 ft. perspective. We have discovered the Bible offers answers to life's ultimate questions. Let's review our drawing from last week...Graphic...

Today we move forward in God's story to a dark time in the history of Israel and we learn that **even in the darkest of times God's promise lights our way home...if we walk in the light.** History is a record of God's promise to restore us. God's faithfulness to His promise can be good news or bad news depending on which side of the promise you're on. The good news is that God promises that those who trust in His plan and provision will be saved. The paradise that was lost in the Garden of Eden will be recreated with a new heaven and a new earth prepared for those who tether their lives to the promise of God. A verse we read recently in our Join the Journey devotional says, **"For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us."** 2 Corinthians 1:20.

But God also promises that those who reject His provision will not enter the place prepared for the faithful. As we follow the path of God's promise we discover that God's covenant people were constantly harassed by her godless enemies. The Egyptians, Canaanites, Amalekites, Moabites, Ammonites, Philistines, all rejected the One True God and worshiped gods of their own choosing. God's people then as now were attacked from within and from without. Externally, Israel was often at war with these groups. Internally, there was the constant temptation to worship their gods, marry their women and serve their kings. What a relief it must have been when God reiterated His promise to King David. He promised three things; a permanent place (the land and the temple), a permanent rest, and a permanent kingdom. **"I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, ¹¹ even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. 2 Samuel 7:10-11**

God's people could finally settle into the land God gave them and rest under the rule of a righteous king. But that didn't happen. Israel in the north and Judah in the south, suffered under a succession of faithless rulers until God's

people went into captivity. Still, God always keeps His promises. He revealed to Jeremiah the prophet how He was going to do so. As a result, Jeremiah issued a warning to those who ignore the promise and hope to those who believe the word of God:

Jeremiah 23:1-8... The faithless shepherds in this passage provide a sobering reminder to the fathers who are here on Father's Day. You don't have to take a class to be a dad. No one issues a license to parent. In fact, "Parents are the world's greatest amateurs." No one tells you at the hospital that it is your responsibility to see that God's promises are delivered to the next generation. Only a woman can deliver a baby but a dad can deliver the promises of God. But if enough fathers fail in their calling then the future is bleak. That's what happened in Israel. Israel faltered when the fathers were faithless. When the people became so caught up in the culture or pursued their own pleasure and forgot about the next generation they suffered. There were times when no man would step forward and lead leaving the responsibility to the women and children. **Isaiah (3:12)** cried out, "O My people! Their oppressors are children, and women rule over them." The leaders were so complacent that even the scriptures were lost. After a long period of decline a godly king named Josiah, who reigned in the time of Jeremiah, initiated some reforms. While reawakening the worship of God in a renovated temple he got word that the scriptures had been found. In 2 Chronicles 34:21 Josiah said, "Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book which has been found; for great is the wrath of the LORD which is poured out on us because our fathers have not observed the word of the LORD, to do according to all that is written in this book."

Jeremiah warned the people of the consequences of taking God's promises for granted. In **Jer. 39** we can read a description of what happened.

The bad news is: God promises to discipline His wayward children. **Hebrews 12:7-11** "God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?" ⁸ But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness. ¹¹ All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."

The good news is: God promises forgiveness through a New Covenant. God, in His great love, did not give up on Israel. He has made a promise and it will come to pass. **Isaiah 9:2**, "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light;

Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them.” And who will deliver the light? Isaiah 9:6-7 says, “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.”

To Adam and Eve God promised a serpent-killer; to Abraham, a sacrificial substitute; to Moses, a Deliverer who would be the fulfillment of the Law; to David, a righteous king; to Jeremiah, a righteous Branch. God made promises to Israel that will be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the “righteous Branch.” He fulfilled the Old Covenant types and shadows (see Hebrews 8–10). Jesus represents the “substance” (Col. 2:17) all these shadows pointed to. The OT details the promises of God. The NT details the fulfillment of those promises to His people.

Jeremiah predicted...**“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.³³ “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.³⁴ “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” 31:31-34**

So the question this morning is, “Is your life tethered to the promise of God?” I have repelled down a mountain one time in my life. It was a frightening experience at first. I wasn’t sure if the rope would hold so I fought against the rope. But once I realized that I was secure on bole I leaned back and put my full weight on the rope and enjoyed the scenery and the ride down. If you need hope this morning then tether your life to the promises of God. “He who promised is faithful” (Heb. 10:23) and He will bring it to pass.