

The Most Powerful Promise

We don't have the full transcript of God's earliest conversations with man but among some of the earliest words God spoke in the Bible, we find the promise of a Saviour, of One who would come and bruise the head of the serpent, one day. In **Genesis 3:15** God declares the promise that would bring us Jesus. That is why this is such a glorious season: we celebrate the fulfilment of God's greatest and earliest promise. That same promise was repeated 425 times throughout the Old Testament.

I want us to look at 3 couples in the Bible to whom God made powerful promises.

1. Abraham and Sarah

Genesis 12:1-3 - *Now the Lord had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, from your family and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."*

- a) When God wants to do something in the earth, He always starts with a **promise**. The promise reveals His will and the extent of what He wants to accomplish.
- b) Secondly, God **reveals** His promise. He speaks to us, He lets us know what He is about to do.

Genesis 18:17 - *And the Lord said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,*

Amos 3:7 - *Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.*

John 15:15 - *No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

When God declares a promise, He reveals it and then He looks for someone who will believe Him enough to be a carrier of that promise.

- c) God looks for someone to carry His promise.

Right from the earliest of times, right from the first pages of Genesis, we see God looking for someone who would believe, receive, conceive and release the promise. Here, that person was **Sarai**. She was chosen to carry more than a son; she was chosen to carry a promise from God.

The promise came to people like Abram and Sarai – elderly and barren. The promise must have felt impossible and overwhelming. There was nothing that they could do, in their own ability to cause the promise to come to pass. Often, the promises of God come to us and appear impossible to accomplish. However, this story, just like the

Christmas story attest to the faithfulness of God and the power of God to fulfill His promises!

d) We partner with God by **believing** the promise.

Faith is simply agreeing with the promise – regardless of how impossible it may seem, how unqualified we may feel or what our circumstances may look like at the time.

James 2:23 - *And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.*

The fulfillment of the promise requires only our faith.

Hebrews 11:11-12 - *By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.*

As I mentioned before, Sarah carried more than a son, she carried a promise. We are here today (both the Jewish nation and the Gentile Church) because of that promise.

Galatians 3:29 - *And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

God is still a God of promise today and he is still looking for people today who can believe the promises of God and who can carry them (like Sarah).

2. Zacharias and Elizabeth

We find their story in **Luke 1:5-25**.

Zacharias had a powerful encounter in the Temple of God. And again, God revealed Himself as a God of promise. Zacharias and his wife, Elizabeth, were both advanced in years and barren. God declared that her womb was going to be open and that she would conceive.

a) Elizabeth was going to be personally blessed as she was going to carry a son. However, like Sarah, she was about to carry more than a son: she was going to carry a promise – a promise for the people of Israel.

Their son John was going to fulfill the promise that God made regarding sending Elijah again **“to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and to make ready a people for the Lord”**.

God blesses us to be a blessing. God’s promises come to us but they’re not just for us: we are carriers, stewards of those blessings for others also. Just like Abraham and Sarah, God also had others in mind.

- b) Interestingly, **verse 20** shows us that Zacharias doubted. We need to co-operate with the promises of God by simply believing.

Zacharias was then temporarily unable to speak – right until the birth of John. Why was that? We must be careful not to abort the promises of God by our words. We need to speak in line with the promise or say nothing at all.

Proverbs 18:21a - *Death and life are in the power of the tongue*

3. Joseph and Mary

God spoke powerful promises to Abraham and Sarah, Zacharias and Elizabeth. However, the most powerful promise, the most unusual, was made to Mary: she was going to carry the greatest promise ever spoken to mankind and the first promise of the Bible.

Luke 1:31-38 - *31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” 34 Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” 35 And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible.” 38 Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.*

This promise of God was on a completely different level of impossibility: a young woman who had never known a man intimately was going to conceive in that state.

Mary was chosen to carry God’s ultimate promise, one revealed in every book of the Old Testament, mentioned some 425 times.

- a) God’s promises always seem overwhelming and bigger than us. Often God declares things that eye has not seen and hear has not heard – things beyond the realm of our natural human experience.

God said to Sarai: *“Is there anything too hard for the Lord?”*

God said to Mary: *“For with God nothing will be impossible”.*

- b) But Mary had to believe:

V.45 - *Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”*

The promises of God are not automatic: their fulfillment is always dependant on our ‘believing’. We need to co-operate with God by agreeing with the promise and saying like Mary:

V.38b - ... *Let it be to me according to your word.*”

Closing thoughts

God uses people to be carriers of His promises. These 3 couples in the Bible were blessed to be a blessing. Those blessings were extended to many others, even to nations and generations.

Like Sarah, Elizabeth, or Mary, we are also carriers of His promises. Like them, we have also received promises:

2 Peter 1:4a - *by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises,*

We don't need to live lives of spiritual bareness, but we can live fruitful lives by deciding to believe and to carry God's promises to people around us.

Verse 8: *for if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

We can carry the same blessings that blessed us into a lost and dying world. The same promise that got us saved, will save others as well, the same healing we received can heal others as well. Such as we have received, we give also. God is a God of promise – not just to us but to many around us. So let us be believers and carriers of God's promises to our world.

In a season of gifts don't forget to give Jesus, the first and most powerful promise of God.