



THEN *the*
END
will come

WEEK 3: God keeps His Promises

 **Maranatha**
Baptist Church

5 Truths that will shape your eschatology

As I'm sure you're aware, eschatology (the doctrine of the end times) is one of those doctrines where godly people disagree. Many of these people have spent years studying the Scripture and searching out the best possible interpretation. They have attended schools of academia. They have studied the original languages. They have read from the brightest minds in history. And yet, these men whom we respect, have been unable to find common ground on this subject.

So why study eschatology? Why waste our time looking at a doctrine at which the experts can't agree? Well, the simple answer is found in **2 Peter 1:3**. Peter writes, *"His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to **life and godliness, through the knowledge of him** who called us to his own glory and excellence."* In this verse Peter says that we have access to everything we need to live the Christian life the way that God expects. It happens when we access "divine power" – the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who strengthens us for the Christian walk. And it happens as we pursue the "**knowledge of God**" that is found in the **Bible** – the **knowledge of God** from **Genesis** to **Revelation**.

So why study eschatology? We study it because it's in the Bible. We study it because we believe it will lead to greater knowledge of God. We study it because we know that in some way it will help us to live the life that God commanded us to live. And we study it because we want to grow in our worship of God.

Our approach will be a little different from other studies we have done. Rather than looking at the individual pieces of this puzzle and trying to arrange them into a cohesive picture, we're going to zoom out to the broader themes of Scripture that will help us understand the doctrine as a whole. Rather than trying to create a detailed timeline of events that lead to a final conclusion, our study will seek to provide a roadmap that so we can sort out the details for ourselves. We're going to focus on the broader truths upon which most theologians agree, and then allow those truths to shape our personal perspective of this doctrine.

We'll take those truths one at a time, and then perhaps take a closer look at how these truths relate to the COVENANTS (i.e. promises) God made to his people throughout the Old Testament. **Here's a list of the 5 truths that we'll cover in the next several weeks.**

1. God's word is clear (perspicuity) and is meant to be interpreted literally.
2. Israel and the church are one in Christ, yet distinct.
3. God will fulfill his unconditional covenants to Israel.
4. The "day of the Lord" is a time of physical judgment of the wicked on the earth.
5. Those who are "in Christ" through faith will not experience God's wrath because Christ already endured it on the cross.

The SURE WORD of GOD

dependable, reliable, certain

Over the years I have learned some things about parenting. I would like to say that I've grown a little as it relates to "making" and "keeping" promises. Early in my parenting I would make certain statements without thinking – "When we get home we'll get some ice cream." or "When it's 8:00 we can watch that show." The problem is that circumstances change, interruptions occur, and unplanned events interfere with the original plan for the day. There were things I didn't anticipate. There were needs I couldn't foresee. There were details I wasn't aware of. If I had known these, then I would never have made the promise. But the fact is, I am limited in my knowledge, power, and follow through. So, I learned to make my statements that were a little more open ended. For example, "If everything goes according to plan, then we might be able to get some ice cream when we get home." OR "If you've done your homework, and it's oaky with your mom, then we'll see about watching that show at 8:00." I have learned to build in contingencies to address the uncertainties of life.

God, however, does not have to build in contingencies, because God knows it all, is in charge of it all, and has unlimited power to fulfill every detail of his word. When God makes a promise, he not only understands the present implications, but also the future implications. And when God makes a promise, the fulfillment of that promise rests on him alone. He will keep it! He will do it! That's the precedent we find in Scripture, and that is the truth we'll explore in this week's study guide.

This summer in our **Sunday Night's in the Park** we covered **six** covenant promises of the Old Testament; **five** of those were given primarily to Israel. For the sake of our study, we'll identify certain features of those promises and seek to evaluate them in relation to God's character.

BRIEF look at the COVENANTS

1. **God's covenant to Adam and Eve:**

Genesis 3:14–15 (ESV) - ¹⁴ *The Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. ¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you. ¹⁷ And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of*

your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”
”

a. **Underline the phrases that begin with “I will.” What does this say about the source of the promise?**

b. **What does this say about the certainty of the fulfillment?**

c. **Has God been faithful to his word? Is there anything left to do? (*Romans 16:20 – “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet”*)**

2. God’s covenant to Noah:

Genesis 6:11–13 (ESV) - ¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. ¹³ And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Genesis 9:8–13 (ESV) - ⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹ “Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” ¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living

creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³ I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

a. **Underline the phrases that begin with “I will.” What does that say about the source of the promise?**

b. **What does it say about the fulfillment? Has God been faithful?**

3. **God’s Covenant to Abraham: gen 12:1-3; 17:3-8**

Genesis 12:1–3 (ESV) -¹ Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Genesis 17:3–8 (ESV) -³ Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, ⁴ “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an **everlasting covenant**, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. ⁸ And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an **everlasting possession**, and I will be their God.”

a. **Underline the phrases that begin with “I will.” What does that say about the source of the promise?**

5. God's Covenant with David:

2 Samuel 7:12–16 (ESV) - ¹² *When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.* ¹³ *He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.* ¹⁴ *I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men,* ¹⁵ *but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.* ¹⁶ *And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be **established forever.**' "*

a. **Underline the phrases that begin with "I will." What does that say about the source of the promise?**

b. **What does it say about the fulfillment?**

6. **What conclusions can we make about God's ability to keep his promises? Why is the fulfillment of his promises so certain?**

ISRAEL'S VIEW of GOD'S COVENANT

How did Israel view God's Covenant Promises? Let's look at some examples throughout the Old Testament.

1. **Think of the time when Israel was captive in Egypt. How did God's covenant with Abraham impact his response to their trouble?**

Exodus 2:24–25 (ESV) - ²⁴ *And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.* ²⁵ *God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.*

Exodus 3:14–17 (ESV) - ¹⁴ God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I am has sent me to you.’ ” ¹⁵ God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the **God of Abraham**, the **God of Isaac**, and the **God of Jacob**, has sent me to you.’ This is my **name forever**, and thus I am to be **remembered** throughout **all generations**. ¹⁶ Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers, the **God of Abraham**, of **Isaac**, and of **Jacob**, has appeared to me, saying, “I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, ¹⁷ and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.” ’

2. Think of the time when Israel worshipped the golden calf at Mount Sinai, and God threatened to destroy them. How did Moses understand God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

Exodus 32:11–14 (ESV) - ¹¹ But **Moses implored the Lord his God** and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² **Why should the Egyptians say**, ‘With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. ¹³ **Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants**, to whom you **swore by your own self**, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.’ ” ¹⁴ And the **Lord relented** from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people.

3. In Leviticus 26 God spells out the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. How does his covenant to Abraham impact his response?

*Leviticus 26:40–45 (ESV) - ⁴⁰ “But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me ... ⁴² then I will remember my **covenant** with **Jacob**, and I will remember my **covenant** with **Isaac** and my covenant with **Abraham**, and I will **remember the land**... ⁴⁴ Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the LORD their God. ⁴⁵ But I will for their sake remember the **covenant** with their **forefathers**, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.”*

4. Think of the time when the exiles came back from Babylonian captivity.

a. *Nehemiah 1:4–7 (ESV) - ⁴ As soon as I heard these words I sat down and wept and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven. ⁵ And I said, “O Lord God of heaven, the great and awesome God who **keeps covenant** and **steadfast love** with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁶ let your **ear be attentive** and your **eyes open**, to hear the **prayer** of your **servant** that I now pray before you day and night for the people of **Israel your servants**, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against you. Even I and my father’s house have sinned. ⁷ We have acted very corruptly against you and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, and the rules that you commanded your servant Moses.*

How did God’s promises influence Nehemiah’s response to “bad news?”

b. *Nehemiah 1:8–11 (ESV) - ⁸ Remember the word that you commanded your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are **unfaithful**, I will **scatter** you among the peoples, ⁹ but if you **return** to me and keep my commandments and do*

them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there **I will gather them and bring them** to the place that I have chosen, to make my name dwell there.'

How does God's faithfulness to honor his commitment to discipline Israel encourage Nehemiah now?

- c. **Nehemiah 1:10-11** - ¹⁰ They are **your servants and your people**, whom you have **redeemed by your great power and by your strong hand**. ¹¹ O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of **your servant**, and to the prayer of **your servants** who delight to **fear your name**, and give success to your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." Now I was cupbearer to the king.

Why does Nehemiah think that God's answer to prayer is so important?

NT view of the COVENANTS

1. **When the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary, he reiterated specific promises related to Christ's birth.**

Luke 1:30-33 (ESV) - ³⁰ And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to 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."

What is the significance of Jesus being given the "throne of David"? What kind of throne would you expect?

2. In the days between Jesus' resurrection and ascension, he spoke to the disciples about the "kingdom."

*Acts 1:3, 6-7 (ESV) - ³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and **speaking about the kingdom of God**... ⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time **restore the kingdom to Israel**?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.*

- a. Based on the teaching of Christ, had the "kingdom promise" to David been fulfilled?
- b. How did the disciples understand the coming kingdom? And did Christ correct their view?
- c. What can we expect about the future kingdom? What precedent has been set throughout the Scripture?

3. In Peter's first sermon in Acts 2, he discusses God's promise to Israel.

- a. *Acts 2:22–24 (ESV) - ²² "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.*

How did Jesus fulfill this promise? Was it literal or figurative?

- b. **Acts 2:29–32 (ESV)** - ²⁹ “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that **God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne**, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

How should we expect God to fulfill his promise in verse 30?

4. **When John writes the book of Revelation he sets an expectation of fulfilment in his introduction.**

Revelation 1:1–3 (ESV) - ¹ The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that **must soon take place**. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, ² who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. ³ Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

As far as John is concerned, have the words of Revelation been fulfilled?

According to verse 3, what should we do while we wait?

As a result of verse 3, how important is the book of Revelation?



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