

- **Sickness, injustice, and death** in the world today (cf. Eccl. 3:16). Sicknesses take loved ones too early. Miscarriages steal the possibility of a life on earth. Injustices happen on a number of levels. Financial injustices and fraud. Shootings. There are 40-50 million (estimated) abortions worldwide each year. Sit on that for a moment.
- **Sin and separation from God's presence** is the ultimate cause. Sin is a rejection of God's kingship over us so we can rule ourselves and our world in our way. We all fall short of God's glory. In rejecting the giver of life, we have unleashed death into the world. No matter what any of us do, death will steal life from us and our loved ones.

### Covenants of Hope in a Messiah

All people deserved to be cursed, but God made promises and covenants that gave people hope in a future when God would be king over creation and set everything right again.

- God promised a childless man named **Abraham** that the whole world would be blessed through his offspring. His offspring would own the gate of his enemies. As Abraham's great grandson Joseph was raised to power, it seemed would bring these days of blessing, but he died and the cycle of corruption and enslavement took control once again. But God did separate Abraham's chosen children - Israel - from the world. He promised to live among them and bless them as their ruler and king.
- But Israel rejected God as their king too. They wanted a human king like the nations had. After giving them a disastrous king like the nations had (Saul), God gave them a king after his own heart, **David**. God promised this king David that he would have a child who God would call "Son" who would be king on David's throne forever. David's son Solomon became king and had wisdom from God's Spirit and as he brought peace to the kingdom, it seemed God's promise was being fulfilled. God dwelled in the temple. Prosperity abounded. But Solomon's wives turned his heart toward other gods and Solomon relied on other nations. Israel turned back to the power Satan offered and God plagued them with enemies once again.
- While being punished by God, God sent **prophets** who renewed Israel's hope by speaking of a future day when everything would be set right.
  - God's kingdom and rule would fully come into the world and would crush all the kingdoms; his kingdom would never end (cf. Isaiah 52:1-12; Daniel 2).
  - Satan would be crushed, the dead would be raised, peace, security, and righteousness would result. All the people would come to learn of God and his ways at his holy city. (cf. Isaiah 2:1-4; 24-27; Ezekiel 37)
  - This would all happen through a king - the Messiah - who would rule in righteousness. He would be the offspring of Abraham and of David who would live and reign as king over Israel forever. (cf. Isaiah 9:1-7; 11:1-10)
  - One day God's king really would come to bring Israel and the nations back to him, to conquer Israel's enemies, and to raise the dead so God's children could enjoy a relationship with God in the new creation God always planned.

## The Story of the Messiah

As a teacher of the Law of Moses named Gamaliel points out in Acts 5, many false messiahs came and claimed to be someone great. They amassed many followers. But when they were killed, their followers all scattered. Not so with Jesus...

- Jesus did not profess his greatness, but God's. At the same time, God professed Jesus' authority by working signs and miracles through him by the Holy Spirit. As Jesus healed the sick, healed the demon oppressed, restored sight to the blind, and preached good news to the poor, Jesus demonstrated and professed that God's kingdom had come upon them in his very presence. Like yeast spreads through flour, God's rule and realm was starting to slowly take over the world.
- The rulers of this age saw what it was like for God to be their king in the person of Jesus. To them, it looked like them losing power. Their whole world really was being turned upside down by this Jesus. The Jews falsely accused him and killed him at the hands of the Romans. Yet, the followers of Jesus didn't scatter after Jesus was murdered. In fact, within weeks, months, and years, they had multiplied to obscene proportions. Why did they follow an executed prophet?
- *"This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses," (Acts 2:32).* The followers of Jesus proclaimed that this Jesus was different: God raised him from the dead and hundreds upon hundreds of them were witnesses of this fact. When the rulers of this age threatened them with beatings, prison, and execution for proclaiming Jesus' resurrection and kingship from heaven, they simply replied: *Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard (Acts 4:19-20).*

## What Does This Mean?

Though Law and Prophets told in many places in many ways the story of God's plan for the future world, few expected God to throw down Satan and bring his kingdom power into the world through the execution and resurrection of the promised king; on the other hand, tens of thousands of people's expectations were transformed in a beautiful way when they saw the evidence. Messengers went out from Jerusalem proclaiming the good news of what God had done in Jesus - interpreting to the Israel and to the world what God had just done in history. So what was and is God doing in Jesus?

God's kingdom is not *from/of* this world (cf. John 18:36), but God was *beginning* to bring his kingdom rule on earth as in heaven (cf. Matthew 6:10). But God has not yet brought the fullness of his kingdom into the world, nor has God raised the dead and pronounced final judgment, but **Jesus is...**

**A. A sign of God's kingdom power** through Jesus to conquer the evil kingdoms of this world. He came to destroy the works of the devil. What God has done in Jesus is especially a sign against the evil powers of Satan's domain of darkness. It is a sign against Satan and death - the greatest enemies of God's kingdom. In Jesus, God is

making a loud statement that the gates of hell will not prevail over him, nor the one who has the power over death, nor those who choose to wield death and injustice against others for their own good (cf. Psalm 2; 110; Daniel 2; 7; Matthew 28:18; Acts 17:30-31; Hebrews 2:5-9; 10:12-14; 1 John 3:8).

- B. A model of our spiritual resurrection.** We too can die and be reborn as Jesus was, yet in a spiritual way. Through faith in Jesus, repentance, and baptism, God forgives us of our sins and raises us from dead ways of living to live a completely new life by the power of the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus. This is a first fruits taste now of God's Spirit and of God's new creation and of our bodily resurrection (cf. Romans 6:1-14; 8:1-25).
- C. The firstfruits of the new creation and of the bodily resurrection.** Death and decay did not overcome Jesus. He died, was buried, and God raised him never to die again. This was Jesus' hope and this is the concrete hope of those who follow Jesus. One day, all the dead will be raised. Those of Satan will be bodily raised to resurrection of death, those in Christ will be bodily raised to a resurrection of life. God has proved his ability to do this in Jesus through the Holy Spirit. (cf. Romans 8:18-24; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 15:1-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

### **What Are We Doing Now? (Consider quoting some specific scripture)**

- 1. Primarily**, we are proclaiming this good news to people and urging people to be reconciled to God. We have all foolishly rejected God, but God has sent Jesus as a sin sacrifice to demonstrate both sin's destruction and God's love for us. We have been made right with God, and God has sent us out as emissaries of this hope. (cf. Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 3:23; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21)
- 2. Collectively**, we show the world and one another what it looks like when God is king. We all, with various gifts from God support one another, love one another, and speak the truth to one another so we can grow to be more perfectly like the new Adam, the new Human - Jesus Christ the righteous (cf. John 13:34-35; Ephesians 4:7-16).
- 3. In the world**, we try to ask what our homes, neighborhoods, schools, cities, etc. would look like if God were king. How would we behave if the holy rule of our heavenly had actually broken into this world? It has, and so we seek to live out whatever the answer to that question is by asking what Jesus would do and would have us to do. This is primarily displayed by proclamation of truth and a showing of mercy and love toward the weak and hurting. (cf. Matthew 5:43-48; 6:10; James 1:27)
- 4. We wait for the Son** and a new heavens and new earth where righteousness dwells. God is making all things new and he has urged us to tell you to be made new by submitting to and waiting for his Christ. One day, the Son of God - Jesus Christ - will come from heaven to judge the living and the dead. So, we urge you to repent and be reconciled to God, join the body of Christ on earth, do the good works he has prepared for us to do, and wait for the Son to come from heaven. (cf. John 5:25-30; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Peter 3:11-13; Revelation 20:11-22:21)