

TEMPLE BAPTIST CHURCH

THE GIFT

WEEK ONE: A FATHER'S PROMISE

In 1989, an 8.2 earthquake almost flattened Armenia, killing over 30,000 people in less than four minutes. In spite of the devastation, such tragedies often provide a window to peek at the contents of someone's heart. Let me show you the loving heart of one father.

In the midst of chaos and destruction, he rushed to his son's school, to the back corner of his son's class room and began to dig. What were the chances that his son could have survived such destruction? He had made a promise to always be there for his son, and this promise gave strength to his body and motivated him mentally.

Well-meaning parents tried to pull him out of the rubble saying: "It's too late! They're dead! There's nothing you can do!" The fire chief shouted, "Fires and explosions are happening everywhere. You're in danger. Go home!" Finally, the police came and said, "You're angry, distraught, but it's over. Go home." But this father had made a promise, and he was going to keep it!

The love this father had in his heart for his son kept him digging for hours and hours. Then, in the 38th hour, he pulled back a boulder and heard his son's voice crying for help. Immediately, he screamed, "ARMAND!" Back came the words, "Dad!? I told them! I told the other kids that if you were still alive, you'd save me! You promised me, you said you'd always be there for me! You did it, dad!"

As we celebrate this Christmas season, we are reminded that God keeps His promises. *Read Isaiah 9:1-7*; it is still seven hundred years until the time of fulfillment, but the prophet speaks of the future as if he saw it already. He speaks as if he already stood in adoration before the manger of Jesus. Hebrews 6:18 says, "so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us." God keeps His promises, He cannot lie! He is a faithful Father.

Christmas is God's promise fulfilled. Celebrating the birth of Jesus reminds us of what God has done in the past, but serves as a source of hope for our future. In the midst of all the hustle and bustle, the noisy sounds of family and friends, be sure to listen for the voice of God saying, "I keep my promises!" Remember that just as Isaiah waited for Christ's first coming, we now await his second coming. "Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me."

"In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." - John 14:1-3

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

1. What promises has God made to us about His Son?
2. What do these promises mean to us this Christmas?
3. Since God cannot lie and always keeps His promises, how should we live each day?

TEMPLE CHILDREN

God promised His people that He would send Jesus, and God always keeps His promises. God told a man named Isaiah that Jesus was coming. *Read Isaiah 9:6-7. If you have older children, read Isaiah 9:1-7.* When Isaiah said that Jesus was coming, no one knew exactly who He was or how long it would be before He came to Earth; however, Isaiah used words like “Wonderful,” “Mighty,” “Everlasting,” and “Prince of Peace” to describe Jesus, so everyone knew He was going to be awesome.

Everyone was very excited to hear that Jesus was coming. Isaiah told everyone to be on the look-out for Jesus. Isaiah wrote about Jesus in the Bible and told everyone he knew. Isaiah’s book tells us many things about Jesus, even though Isaiah lived 700 years before Jesus was born.

ACTIVITY

Hide a small baby Jesus somewhere in the family room. A small toy baby doll or just a picture of baby Jesus will work. God promised His people that Jesus was coming, and God always keeps His promises. Because of God’s promise, the people were excited. They had to wait a very long time for Jesus to come. Tell your children you have hidden a pretend baby Jesus somewhere in the room. Encourage them to work together to find baby Jesus.

Once God’s people knew that Jesus was coming, they waited and looked for Him all the time. Everyone was very excited when Jesus was born just like you were excited to find your Jesus!