

THE BIG IDEA: The promise is a placeholder for the presence.

The Take-Off

It's hard to believe that this is the last Sunday of the year.

What a year it's been, too, and yet, if we had the time to share - and to share honestly - I'd be willing to guess that many, if not all, of us could say that there are still things that we had hoped to see happen in 2018 that didn't.

That's a hard place to be, especially if it seems like everyone around you is celebrating things that happened.

Oddly enough, that feeling fits perfectly with our last week in The Last Leon series, because today we're going to go all the way back to the beginning and talk about the WHEN behind Jesus' coming.

But first, a recap:

- Week 1, Teen Challenge was with us to help us see WHY Jesus came. He came to TRANSFORM us.
- Week 2, we talked about WHAT Jesus came to. He came to the CROSS. He came to DIE.
- Last week, we talked about HOW Jesus came. He came UNEXPECTEDLY.

All of that takes us backwards from the end result to the day of Jesus' birth.

But to go to the very beginning - to answer the question of WHEN Jesus was coming - we've got to go all the way back to Genesis 3.

Adam and Eve are in the garden naked and the serpent is in the garden gloating.

Innocence has been shattered and sin has entered the world, and in the middle of an awful chapter, God whispers a promise in verse 15: a seed will come and he will defeat the serpent.

It's the first Messianic prophecy in the Bible - that's simply a statement in Scripture that points to Jesus' coming as the Messiah

Research how many there are and you'll get numbers that range from 60ish into the hundreds. The point is that they all point to Jesus and Jesus fulfilled them in a way that no one else did.

Here are a few:

- Micah 5:2 / The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem / fulfilled in Matt. 2:1-6
- Isaiah 7:14 / The Messiah will be born of a virgin / fulfilled in Matt. 1:20-23
- Zech. 9:9 / The Messiah will enter Jerusalem triumphantly on a donkey / fulfilled in Matt. 21:8-11
- Psalm 41:9 / The Messiah will be betrayed by one of his followers / fulfilled in Luke 22:21-22

You get the idea. The point of this morning isn't to cover all of the Messianic prophecies, but to answer the question of when Jesus was coming and what we can learn from people who waited a long time for him.

When was Jesus coming? He was and is ALWAYS coming!

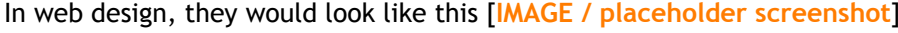
The word God gave me for this final Sunday of the year is more about the gap between when God spoke in Genesis 3 and when Jesus appeared in Luke 2.

Gen. 3 - the promise "He will come" / Luke 2 - the presence "He is here"

No matter how much time was between them, we can agree that it was a lot of time spent waiting on the presence to fulfill the promise

That describes many of us at the end of 2018 - still waiting for a promise - when will it happen?

1. Promises and placeholders

- a. How did the people of God wait then, and how do the people of God wait now?
- b. As I prayed over this, I feel like the Lord downloaded this statement to me: **the promise is a placeholder for the presence**
- c. We know what the promise was and we know how the presence came, so let's talk about placeholders
- d. They do exactly what they sound like they do: they hold a place
- e. In web design, they would look like this [
- f. They are used when you don't know what image will end up there but you know one will
- g. They are like a reserved sign on a seat - they hold the place now for what's coming later
- h. We see this with the people of God in the OT
- i. Gen. 3:15 the promise is given, and all throughout the OT they hold onto that promise no matter what
- j. Sometimes they hold on well, other times not so well
- k. But they did set and keep a placeholder in their souls that said "he WILL come"

2. His presence fills it

- a. [Heb. 10:23](#) / How can we “hold tightly without wavering?”
- b. In other words, how can we make our placeholders the strongest they can be?
- c. By strengthening the 4 edges - the guardrails of the promise, if you will [[IMAGE / Guardrails](#)]
- d. ONE, the WORD of God
 - [Psalm 119:28-29](#) / encourages us and keeps us from lying to ourselves about God’s promises
 - [Psalm 119:165](#) / strengthens us and keeps us from stumbling
 - We want to help you with this in 2019 - here’s how [[VIDEO / Kayda and Bible reading plan](#)]
- e. TWO, the WORSHIP of God
 - [Colossians 3:15-16](#) / imagine Sundays in worship corporately when we’ve all been in the word during the week individually!
 - [Acts 16:25](#) / worship opened the door to freedom!
- f. THREE, the WITNESS of God
 - [1 Cor. 13:1-3](#) / there’s a lot we can do, but only one that we MUST do
 - [John 13:35](#) / it’s our love - our UNITY - our COMMUNITY - that is the greatest witness of Jesus
- g. FOUR, the WORK of God
 - [Matt. 28:18-20](#) / this is the work we’ve been sent to do
 - [Luke 19:10](#) / it’s what Jesus did and what we do
 - We fuel the work with our time, our talent, and our treasure

The Landing

Here’s the deal: I can’t tell you WHEN the presence of God will fulfill the promise of God in your specific situation
But I can tell you that it WILL happen and that you WILL faithfully hold tightly without wavering by increasing the
WORD, WORSHIP, WITNESS, and WORK of God

Practically, that happens as you do the 3 things we do as a body: we’re NEAR GOD through the word and worship, NEAR
MAN as we strengthen the witness of God in community, and MAKING DISCPLERS as we give our resources to the work
of God by serving.

1-2-3. It’s that simple.

Which of this 3 will be your first step into 2019?

Let’s pray