

Series: *Christmas 2010*

Title: "Christmas: God Always Keeps His Promises" (Part 1)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 12/12/2010

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This broadcast presents the first half of a sermon preached by Dr. Elliott in Baltimore, Maryland on December 27, 2009. The second half will air on our next broadcast.

On this Sunday morning of Christmas weekend, turn with me in your Bibles, please, to the book of Second Peter, chapter one. I'd like to read the entire chapter, but we're going to be focusing on one particular phrase in one verse. So let's hear the Word of the Lord together:

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

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And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were

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eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

And Father, we thank You that as we open this Book this morning, we open the only book of its kind in the entire universe. The only supernatural Book. The inspired Word of God. Infallible. Inerrant. Trustworthy in every detail. And Father, as we look into Your Word this morning, we pray that You would encourage our hearts to trust You more, to gain a greater grasp of Your faithfulness, as we're reminded of the truths that we think about at this time and this season. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

### **“Exceeding Great and Precious Promises”**

On this Sunday morning of this Christmas weekend, I believe it's fitting for us to consider something that's already been mentioned, and that we've already sung about, and that is the promises of God. In verse three of the passage we just read,

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Peter calls them, "exceeding great and precious promises." In the original Greek it literally reads, "the very greatest and most highly prized promises."

And in verse 12 Peter says, "I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and you are established in the present truth." Still, I want to remind you.

And in verse 15 Peter says, again, I want you "to have these things always in remembrance," even after I've gone home to glory. I won't stop reminding you, says Peter, as long as I'm here.

Here in Second Peter chapter one, Peter is giving his readers what we can rightly call an apologetics lesson. Back in First Peter chapter 3, verse 15, he told them to "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Be ready to give an answer.

And here again, in Second Peter, he is telling them, I want you to be ready to give an answer.

People are going to ask you, "Why do you believe the Bible?" "How do you know the Bible is true?" The answer, Peter says, is this: Because God always keeps His promises.

People are going to ask you, "How do you know that Lord Jesus Christ is the one and only Way, the one and only Truth, the one and only Life? How can you be so

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sure of that?" The answer, Peter says, is the same: Because God always keeps His promises.

People are going to ask you: "Why are you living the way you live? Why is it different?" (And I trust that they notice that your life *is* different.) The answer, Peter says, is the same once again: I am endeavoring, by the grace of God, to live a life that pleases God, because God always keeps His promises.

And so this morning, on this Christmas weekend, I want to put you in remembrance, just like Peter two thousand years ago. Christmas is all about one thing: It is the fulfillment of the exceeding great and precious promises of God, in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **The Prophetic Word "Made More Sure"**

And so I want to focus our attention this morning, out of all that we read for the sake of context, on one short phrase at the beginning of verse nineteen. This phrase is our theme this morning, and it is going to be our jumping-off point to consider, in very brief and capsule form, the ways in which the promises of God are fulfilled in the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, two thousand years ago. That little phrase at the beginning of verse 19 says this: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy." "We have also a more sure word of prophecy." In the original language it actually reads like this: "We also have the prophetic word made more sure." "We also have the prophetic word made more sure."

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What exactly does Peter mean by this? What is it, that is “more sure”? What’s the comparison that he’s making? We need to make sure we understand that. Well, there are three possibilities.

One of them we can eliminate right away. Obviously he’s not saying that prophecy is more sure than cunningly devised fables, as he speaks of them in verse 16. That would not prove anything about prophecy.

So, what about a second possibility? Is he saying that the word of prophecy is more sure than the witness and testimony of the apostles? Peter talks about the fact that he, and James, and John saw Jesus transfigured, and they heard the voice of the Father from heaven saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Is Peter saying that prophecy is more sure than that? Well, verse 19 eliminates that possibility as well, because Peter says, “we have *also*” the prophetic word made more sure. In other words, we have something *in addition* to even the eyewitness accounts of the apostles.

This brings us to the third possibility, and it’s really the only one that fits the text and the context as the Holy Spirit has given it to use through Peter. Peter’s point is that the word of prophecy that was given to Israel in ancient times has become “more sure” in the light of what has taken place. We have the word of prophecy *itself* made more sure.

How has it been made more sure? By its fulfillment. It has been established. It has been substantiated, proven, demonstrated, confirmed, verified – *by fact*. God always

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keeps His promises – and He keeps His promises in, and through, and because of, Jesus Christ. That is the focal point of the message of Christmas: “We also have the word of prophecy made more sure.”

In other words, the Old Testament really can only be understood in terms of the person and work of Jesus Christ. That’s why the veil is still there, for the unsaved Jewish reader who reads the Old Testament. The unsaved Jewish reader does not read the Old Testament in terms of Christ. You have to look back at the Old Testament with Christian eyes, with the light of the fulfillment. The Old Testament is a Book of types, and foreshadowings, and promises. Everything in it is of a temporary nature. The whole of the Old Testament is a Book of types and expectation, Israel seeking and waiting and looking for something. Now the great statement which Peter makes here in chapter one is that Christ in His coming upon earth is the fulfillment of all things and everything.

### **“Yea and Amen” – Promise and Fulfillment**

I’d like for you to keep your finger in Second Peter, and turn with me just for a moment to Second Corinthians chapter one, verse twenty. In 2 Corinthians 1:20, Paul says this: “All the promises of God in Christ are ‘Yes,’ and in Him, ‘Amen’.” There in the Old Testament are the promises; there is the “Yes.” God’s affirmative: This is what I am going to do. And in the person and work of Jesus Christ we have the answer, the “Amen” – the confirmation, the substantiation, and the fulfillment of everything God promised through His Old Testament prophets.

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And think about the very detailed nature of that fulfillment. It would be amazing enough if there were a general similarity between the person and work of Jesus Christ and the things promised in the Old Testament. If there were just general similarities, that in itself would defy the odds. But what we have is not just a kind of a general fulfillment. There is a detailed and a precise fulfillment. It is a fulfillment that can only be explained by the fact, as Peter says at the end of chapter one, that the men who wrote these prophecies were writing under the inspiration of God. And the person and work of Christ are the focal point of their prophecies.

And that is where I want to focus our attention this morning. The birth of the Son of God, the person and work of Jesus Christ on earth two thousand years ago, this is the ultimate proof that God always keeps His promises. And so this morning, I simply want to put you in remembrance of these things, as Peter says. I know that for most of us, this is not new ground. It's familiar territory. But we need to be reminded. This is the greatest kind of encouragement for a Christian – to remind ourselves of the absolute certainty of the Word of God, and the absolute certainty of the promises of God.

Of course we don't have the time this morning to get into all the details. We could do an entire semester of Bible classes just studying all of the prophecies that were fulfilled when Jesus Christ came into this world the first time. So the best we can do this morning, if you will, is to fly over the landscape of the Old Testament at about 30,000 feet, if you will, and point out the mountain tops and some cities. And I'm going to refer to a lot of passages that time won't permit us to turn to, but I trust that

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this brief survey, this short reminder course, if you will, that this will be an encouragement to your hearts in these trying times. And after our brief survey, I want to end with some words of personal application and encouragement.

We're going to very quickly, just spending a minute or two on each one, we're going to cover ten points this morning, ten things that demonstrate that God kept His promises in the first coming of Christ. We're just going to spend a minute or two on each of them. This is by no means an exhaustive list. But I want to give you the list first, and then we'll come back and consider each one briefly:

- First, God kept His promise about *the lineage of Jesus Christ*.
- Second, God kept His promise about *the place of Jesus' birth*.
- Third, God kept His promise about *the nature of Jesus' birth*.
- Fourth, God kept His promise about *the time of Jesus' birth*.
- Fifth, God kept His promise about *the words that Jesus would speak*.
- Number six, God kept His promise about *the works Jesus would perform*.
- Number seven, God kept His promise *that Jesus would defeat Satan*.
- Number eight, God kept His promise *that Jesus would be a prophet greater than Moses*.
- Number nine, God kept His promises *about the week of Jesus' crucifixion*.

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- And number ten, God kept His promise *that Jesus would make full and final atonement for sin.*

So now let's come back and focus briefly on each one of these.

### **1. God Kept His Promise about the Lineage of Jesus**

To what tribe does Jesus belong? The answer is, of course, "The tribe of Judah." Of which particular family or house in that tribe? The answer is, "The house of David." Now you remember in the Old Testament it had been prophesied that it was out of the tribe of Judah and out of the house of David that the Messiah, the Deliverer, would come. Not after the line of Levi, but a priest after the order of Melchizedek, out of the line of David. A King and a Priest combined.

A thousand years before His birth, and even prior to that, the promise had been made that He would be of the tribe of Judah and the house of David. And so a child is born who is the living verification of that promise. God kept His promise about the lineage of Jesus.

### **2. God Kept His Promise about the Place of Jesus' Birth**

Where? Bethlehem. And you know, that particular detail shows up only in the book of Micah. The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. And you will remember that when the Lord was born, the wise men came to Herod, looking for the Messiah, the One who was to come. And because Herod, who was an Edomite and not even a Jew, didn't understand exactly why they had come, but he knew it was a threat. He

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consulted the Jewish authorities, and they told Herod that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, according to prophecy. They knew the prophecy. God kept His promise about the place of Jesus' birth.

### **3. God Kept His Promise about the Nature of Jesus' Birth**

Isaiah 7:14, the great prophecy: "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son."

**(To be continued on our next program)**

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