

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

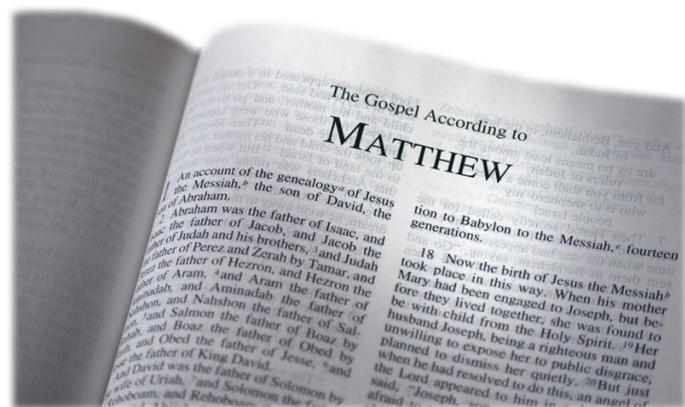
August 5, 2018

Lessons from a Genealogy (2)

by Frank Himmel

Bible lists of names, such as Jesus' genealogy recorded in Matthew 1:1-17, remind us that although many characters are unknown to us, God knows us all. Glancing through this list should bring to mind another vital truth: *God always keeps His word.*

Through the centuries, God made promises to several of these people, many of them directly related to their role in the Messiah's lineage. He promised childless Abraham that he would become a father (Genesis 15:1-5), not just of one son but of many nations (Genesis 17:1ff), and that in his seed all nations would be blessed (Genesis 22:18; see Galatians 3:16). God then promised Judah that the ruler would come from his tribe (Genesis 49:10).



God promised David that his seed would sit on his throne, God's throne (2 Samuel 7). That referred to a line of kings, culminating in the Messiah. The continuing line was conditioned on faithfulness (1 Chronicles 28:7). Unfortunately, many kings in the line were not faithful, and so God promised Jeconiah that even though he was like a signet, he would be "childless" as king (Jeremiah 22:24-30); the line ruling in Judah would stop with him.

Despite God's people's unfaithfulness and their resultant captivity, God promised a restoration. He promised Zerubbabel, one of the leaders of that restoration, that he would be a signet, "for I have chosen you" (Haggai 2:20-23). Interestingly, Zerubbabel is the common link between David and Jesus in Matthew and Luke's genealogies.

Time and again, no matter how likely or unlikely a divine promise might have seemed, and no matter how much time elapsed, God always kept His word.

Thoughtless men and unbelievers ought to take note. God's threats are not idle. The punishment for disobedience He has promised is certain (2 Peter 3). It is perilous for us to ignore the standard of conduct or the conditions of salvation He has revealed.

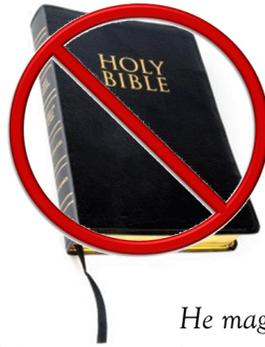
Christians ought to take comfort. God's promise of salvation, and all the accompanying comforts and blessings along the way, are certain. In Paul's words, we are living "in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago" (Titus 1:2). ■

Taking Away the Word

by Frank Himmel

Jesus' Parable of the Sower is about our response to God's word. In the illustration a farmer sows seed which falls into different kinds of soil. The various soils represent the varied hearts of hearers.

One kind of soil is the roadside soil. Jesus' explained it this way: "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved" (Luke 8:13).



Obviously, the devil would prefer that I not listen to God's word at all. He prefers prejudiced people, those whose minds are already made up about religion and who therefore have no desire to study. That starts with the disinterested and the anti-religious, but it by no means stops there. It includes all who are "just sure" about what God does and does not approve and "know in their heart of hearts" they are okay.

But suppose we listen. What then? How does the devil attempt to take away God's word from our hearts?

He plants doubts. He asks whether we can have confidence in our modern Bibles, despite the enormity of evidence pointing to their accuracy. He suggests it is foolishness to believe in miracles because we have

never seen one. He questions why God allows events that run contrary to human wisdom, subtly suggesting that we have supreme wisdom. And as he has done from the beginning, he always questions whether God really means what He says.

He changes our focus. The devil knows that Bible study can be compelling, so he quickly brings other considerations to the forefront in our minds. Work, vacation, sports, retirement, the economy, politics, international events—anything will do if it gets us sidetracked. It might be something good or bad, something new or old, something large or small. He does not care, as long as it shifts our attention.

He magnifies the challenge. Pleasing God requires wholehearted service, so the devil is quick to emphasize how demanding that will be in application. "Do you really think you can live up to that standard?" "Think about how hard it will be to give up..." "Every Sunday?" If he can just convince us to take a halfhearted approach, he will have accomplished his goal.

He points to others. You can be sure the devil is at work when the main thing that comes to mind while listening to a gospel sermon is how much this applies to someone else you know. And the devil loves to point out pretenders, implying that everyone who is trying to serve God is just that.

Do not be roadside soil. "... For we are not ignorant of his schemes" (2 Corinthians 2:11). ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Bruce Williams	Adam Gibson
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	John Baucom
OPENING PRAYER	Howard Moore	
LORD'S SUPPER		
BREAD	Brian Wilson	
CUP	Albert Lee Harrison	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	David Gray	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Sam Walters
CLOSING PRAYER	John Baucom	Ian Brown