

Explain the Messianic Hope. 1: Eternity to the Fall.

This is the same focus as the hope of the Gospel, although the Messiah came at the conclusion of the OT while the Gospel promise continues until the hope is realised at the Second Coming of the Messiah. It is the hope of the elect fixed upon the promise and covenant of God that a divine deliverer would come to rescue God's people from their sin and earthly pilgrimage, bringing them into a eternal kingdom of spiritual blessing and glory. The development of this hope can be traced throughout the whole Bible; indeed it is a crucial matter that Christians should familiarise themselves with since it sets the cross of Christ into the context of God's promise. We can trace this promise as follows:

Eternity: the foundation of the Gospel promise and the hope of the Messiah is the counsel and decree of God in eternity whereby God initiates his plan to have a people for his glory (Acts 2:23; Eph 1:11, 4; Heb 6:17). He decrees to allow sin to appear, to pass by the reprobate and choose the elect, placing them in Christ as far as his purpose is concerned (they are not actually justified until called and given faith in time). This is the beginning of the hope.

The Fall: man is created as God's crown of creation and delegate on the earth. God's decree begins to be worked out and evil is allowed to enter the world through the temptation of the devil to Adam and Eve. The woman is deceived but man deliberately rebels (this principle is important – 1 Tim 2:14). Adam's fall begins the need for deliverance from the power, corruption and penalty of sin through atonement and redemption.

Gen 3:15: the beginning of the hope comes from the promise to Adam and Eve that a woman will bear a son who will destroy the works of the devil. This verse is called the proto-evangelium; it is the Gospel in seed form. Gen 3:21 gives us the suggestion (in symbolic terms) that God had explained the meaning and purpose of atonement – an animal had to die and blood be shed in order for man to be covered. Soon afterwards we see that mankind understood the need for a substitutionary offering (Gen 4:4) so God must have explained this to Adam. The promise of future deliverance from sin and Satan is coupled with the understanding of substitutionary atonement.

Corruption: after sin entered the race through the fall of man, mankind becomes completely evil (Gen 6:5). Man's problem is not outward behaviour but a corrupt heart. What is required is a new heart, something man cannot achieve; something God must sovereignly perform. While the wicked perform religious acts and worship various things, the elect know that they are utterly dependent upon God for salvation – they have faith in God's deliverance.

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