

Hope

Advent

"Wonderful Counselor"

Isaiah 9:2, 6-7:

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned...For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this."

We have hope today, and the people who were listening to Isaiah's prophecy had hope. They had been under oppression for years and Isaiah was telling them this was going to end. Isaiah does not prophesy a king as the people probably imagined. This is sometimes called "The Prophet's Candle" but Isaiah isn't the only prophet telling of Christ's coming.

He said the child would be a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. He would have a great government. How could they hope for anything more. But this Wonderful Counselor and King did not come in their lifetime.

Several centuries later Christ came as a baby not as a King in their eyes. For many years he was growing up and little is known about him. At approximately 30+ years of age he began preaching after being baptized by John the Baptist and people began to think of him as a king they had been waiting for, but he doesn't give that appearance. Just when the people are convinced that he is the one they have been waiting for he is killed and as he was dying as a young man the soldiers put a crown of thorns on his head and a purple robe on his body and said "Hail, King of the Jews!" Pontius Pilate had written above his Head "Jesus of Nazareth, The King Of The Jews." This had been their hope.

At this time, the hope of the people who had been following Christ during his ministry must have lost all hope. Even before this time when he was

So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.

Hebrews 9:28

proclaimed King, Peter had denied knowing him and many of the disciples had hidden because they feared for their lives. Two people who did not seem to lose hope were willing to step forward. They were Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus. They asked to be allowed to bury his body and were willing to be known as believers even at this very trying time of hope. For a short time, their hope for a new kingdom on this earth had been defeated.

With the resurrection of Christ in three days, their hope returned and was manifested even more strongly. They were given a power that could not be vanquished. As Christ prepared to leave them he said:

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

John 14:2-4

Thomas asked: "Master, we have no idea where you're going. How do you expect us to know the road?"

Phillip also questioned. "Master, show us the Father; then we'll be content."

Eugene Peterson in The Message gives the answer from Christ in the next few verses in a very well written translation.

"Jesus said, 'I am the Road, also the Truth, also the Life. No one gets to the Father apart from me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as

well. From now on, you do know him. You've even seen him!' . . . 'Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you aren't mere words. . . . The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing but even greater things, because I, on my way to the Father, am giving you the same work to do that I've been doing. You can count on it.'"

Christ does not give them a direct answer that they would have expected, but he does give them hope enough that they are willing to give their lives to tell the Good News.

Years later Christ talks again about his coming in Revelation. Many people today think that John the Beloved Disciple, the only Disciple who is mentioned being at the crucifixion, wrote Revelation near the end of the first century. We think that Christ died around 33 AD so he had been gone for approximately 60 years and the people had expected him to be returning. John writes in Revelation and quotes Christ saying he is coming soon.

"He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen."
Revelation 22:20-21

What are people to believe. We can say "Hope springs Eternal" but what does that mean in this situation? The people who first started Advent thought they needed to be prepared for the second coming of Christ. They had hope that through prayer and trust their future would be certain with Christ. We have the same hope and security and yet we



"Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul - and sings the tunes without the words - and never stops at all." Emily Dickinson

sometimes doubt. We want more. We want to touch and feel. The second half of the verse from Revelation is our hope, our promise. *"The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people."* Without that grace there is no hope for many people. Hope can be secular, optimistic and universal to some as a goal to be attained, but for those who accept Christ as their personal Savior and have faith, he will come and we will see him someday. Our hope is a secure hope and through prayer it is a promise which is strengthened each day of our lives.

"For I know the plans I have for you,"
declares the Lord,
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

-Jeremiah 29:11



Advent is a journey towards Bethlehem. May we let ourselves be drawn by the light of God made man.

Pope Francis

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we are so feeble and sometimes our hope seems to be in vain. Help us to know that you are always there for us and help us to be prepared through your grace and our love to see you and live with you eternally. Amen

1. Does your hope ever waver?
2. What is hope?
3. Do you have more than hope?
4. What are we hoping for?
5. What can cause our hope to weaken?
6. Do you think Christ hopes we will make the right choices each day?
7. Can prayer strengthen our hope?

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"I am the Alpha and the Omega, said the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."
Revelation 1: 8