

Hope

The Wonder of Christmas – part 2

December 4, 2022

Isaiah 7:14 “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

Some 700 years later, this promised prophecy of hope from the heart of God came true as the virgin Mary gave birth to her firstborn son. They named Him Jesus because He was to save the people from their sins. That’s the reason Jesus was born; He was our Savior who could rescue us from our sins which separated us from a holy God.

- That rescue from sin has a number of applications. We’ll look at five of them.

DAY 1: Hope of the abundant life

1. Everyone is looking for that elusive “it” that will bring satisfaction in this life. The book of Ecclesiastes tells us that no matter where we look “under the Sun” (other than heaven), everything will, in the final analysis, not quench the thirst or satisfy the hunger, enough.

John 10:10 “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

2. Jesus was born to give us **hope of enjoying true life.**

3. The question becomes what is the abundant life? Some think the abundant life is feeling good all the time. That is not possible in a fallen world, with fallen people and with our own fallen nature.

Instead,

John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.

4. First, the hope of eternal life involves turning our first love *for* someone and *to* someone to God Himself. Only will this free us to unconditionally love the people in our lives.

Matthew 22:37-39 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might. This is the first and great commandment. A second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

5. Second, we will experience real life, abundant life, not when we receive love but when he love someone the way God loves us.

6. Unless these are the two top objectives, our chase of abundant life will be plagued with intermittent futility.

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: The hope of Satan's defeat.

1 John 3:8 "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil."

1. Jesus left His place Heaven to come on a rescue mission. He came to rescue us from our sins, and from the power of Satan.

2. Satan began his treacherous schemes all the way back in Genesis 3 in the Garden of Eden. His goal was to lead people away from God and into a life of rebellion and disobedience from the truth of God. From that instant forward, we needed a Savior. From that minute forward, we needed hope.

3. When hope arrived wet and wobbly as baby Jesus that first Christmas, life in His name became a present possibility.

4. There are two agendas on a collision course regarding our lives. One is the Satan's agenda. As we saw in John 10:10 yesterday, Satan's agenda is to steal, kill and destroy our lives. His road is the road that looks awesome in the beginning of the road but leads to eventual and inevitable emptiness, misery, broken relationships, and broken people. He is called the Adversary and the Deceiver. The other agenda is God's—to lead us to the abundant life, now and forever.

5. The devil, whom Peter describes in his letter (1 Peter 5:8) as "your enemy who prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour," is the same one Jesus was talking about who is out only to steal, kill, and destroy your life.

6. Thus, as we find ourselves in this special time of year known as Christmas, we celebrate because Jesus came to pick a fight with our enemy who was trying to destroy our lives. We have hope because the One who could save us from the destruction of our enemy arrived on the scene to rescue us and give us back our lives.

7. It's as if Jesus said, "If you want to be about destroying things, Satan, I'll show you what it means to destroy! I will go to the cross and disarm you and cancel the payment of sin for all of humanity who puts their faith, hope, and trust in me. I'll come as an innocent baby. I'll go to the cross as a perfect sacrifice. I'll defeat death and enjoy a glorious resurrection. Then, 40 days later, I will ascend to Heaven and send my Holy Spirit to empower and lead my followers.

Colossians 2:13 When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. 15 And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: Living a life of hope, now, and forever

1. Satan attempts to lead us on the bad road...

Matt. 7:13-14 Enter by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, but small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

Hebrews 2:14a "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things..."

2. Jesus, fully God chose to step out of His divine glory in heaven for a season that started in the womb of Mary and led to His arrival at Christmas, so that He could become fully human here on earth and not only relate to us, but also become like us in our humanity.

*Hebrews 2:14b-16 "...that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,¹⁵ and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.¹⁶ For surely it is not angels that he helps, **but he helps the offspring of Abraham.**"*

3. "Helps" is a word that means someone rescues another by taking hold of them and lifting them out of danger. It's what a dad did when his 2-year-old daughter, who could not yet swim without the help of her floaties, decided to take off her floaties for a lunch break. But, before lunch was over, she jumped back in the water without putting her floaties back on. The dad saw she was in the water. When he got to the side of the pool, she was staring at him from the bottom with a frightened look that exclaimed: HELP!

4. He dove in and HELPED her to safety, so she didn't end up in a watery grave. The dad did for his girl what Jesus did for us: he HELPED her by rescuing her and pulling her out of danger.

Hebrews 2:17 "Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

5. Jesus HELPED us, rescued us, and saved us. Jesus not only forgave us from our sin, but also, He freed us and positioned us to be fulfilled by Him so we could enjoy abundant life!

*Hebrews 9:26-28 "But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, 28 so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, **not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.**"*

6. What Jesus did when He laid down His life on the cross was pay a sin debt that gave us back our lives. He bought our forgiveness with His broken body and His poured-out blood, not so that we can jump right back into the pool of sinful choices. Instead, so that we can choose freedom, choose life in Christ, and experience that abundant life that Jesus offers us. It is a life of fulfillment that Jesus not only created us to have as a gift but also wants us to open, experience, and enjoy.

Romans 8:23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

7. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: The hope of His second coming...

1. The bible has over 500 hope-filled references to the return of Jesus. That Jesus will return is said more frequently in the New Testament than anything else about Him. Because God fulfilled the over 300 prophecies of hope regarding His initial advent as stated in the Old Testament when Jesus was born, this gives us great hope and confidence that He will do the same to fulfill the over 500 references of His second advent in the days to come. However, for now, we continue to wait with hope.

1 Thess. 1:9 ... They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

1 Thess. 2:19 For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?²⁰ Indeed, you are our glory and joy.

1 Thess. 3:12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.¹³ May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

1 Thess. 4:16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

1 Thess. 5:23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁴ The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

2. The next time Jesus comes He will be riding on a white horse with fire in His eyes, a crown on His head, a robe dipped in blood and the armies of heaven following Him on white horses with a prominent tattoo on His robe and thigh that reads: King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19: 11-16)

3. Jesus is coming again not to deal with sin; He did that first time He came at Christmas with all the hope of Old Testament prophecies fulfilled. However, when Jesus comes back a second time, He will do so bringing salvation with Him for all those who are waiting for His return.

4. And that waiting has been the signature mark of the people of God throughout the ages. It's Jesus teaching us to pray: "Thy Kingdom Come..." We're still waiting for the fullness of that prayer to be answered.

5. It's what we remind ourselves of when we take the Lord's Supper and say in 1 Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." We are still waiting for that day.

6. What strikes you about today's devotional?

DAY 5: The hope of complete and eternal redemption

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,”^m for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’^u or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

1. What strikes you from these verses?

Revelation 21:6 He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”

2. This life will fully and finally be made right. What was wrong will be righted. What was right will be rewarded. What strikes you from these verses?

3. Our Savior, Jesus, is not a pacifist wimp without a plan. He is a warrior King who came to destroy the works of the devil and to rescue us from sin, death, Satan, and hell; and He is coming again one day. Therefore, we have a blessed hope this Christmas season even when things are not going our way.

4. For what do we hope?

- God will make everything new
- There will be no more sickness, no more tears, etc.
- God will redeem of every pain and every suffering
- He turns ashes to beauty

5. This hope kept early Christ followers on guard against sin, sustained them in their sorrows, and undergirded them in the conflict with an evil world. And it is the last words we have from the lips of Jesus that are recorded in the last page of the Bible.

1 Cor. 13:13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.