

Christmas seems to be about a lot of things in our culture

- But originally Christmas was about hope
 - Not, “I **hope** I get what I want for Christmas” (something more)
 - And, when I say the word “**hope**”, I do not mean it in that same way
 - That is how we use the word popularly: An expression of anticipation created by uncertainty (based on unknowns) (vague optimism)
 - The Biblical use of the word “**hope**” is different
 - An expression of expectation (future) based on what is known

Psalm 130:5 & 7, NIV (Hope in His **Word** and in **Himself**)

- That is the Biblical concept of “**hope**”
- Looking forward to good because of something that is known and promised (Cf. **Hebrew 11:1**, NLT)

The opposite of hope is **despair**

- The Bible calls us to hope to keep us from despair
 - **Hebrews 6:18-19a**, NLT
 - Hope = **great confidence and a strong and trustworthy anchor**
 - **Psalm 146:5**, NLT
 - Hope = **joy**
 - **Romans 15:13**, NASB (**God** as source of hope)

Here is why this Biblical understanding of hope is so important

- Life happens in ways that can easily cause us to **despair**
 - Bereaved parents...
 - **1 Thessalonians 4:13**, NLT
 - Christian hope literally helps us make it through today

As I said before, Christmas was originally about hope

- We know this passage well: **Isaiah 9:6-7**, NLT
 - A prophecy about the coming of the Messiah 700yrs before
 - **Advent** = appearing, arrival, coming, visit
- A promise meant to provide hope for God's people

Israel was in despair

- Their despair has to do largely with their **own sin**, the **ruin** it caused and their **inability** to fix it
 - **Isaiah 1:2-8**, NLT
- They had fallen into cold dead religion (false routine) (God saw right through it)
 - **Isaiah 1:11-15**, NLT
- He called them to live differently
 - **Isaiah 1:16-17**, NLT
 - They would refuse—so **God would judge/discipline them...**
- Very dark times; lost; despair... searching for help... in crazy places
 - **Isaiah 8:19-22**, NLT

Then God in His **love** and **grace** and **mercy** would **step in and provide hope**

- **Isaiah 9:1-7**, NLT
- At that moment, Israel was given hope (a promise; an assurance of future good)
 - That hope would **form** them, **sustain** them, **carry** them—through horrific times (for 700 years)
 - Until that First Advent (**Luke 2:8-12**, NLT)
 - All the **dark days** prior were filled with **longing** for **Immanuel** (hope)

For Christians, the weeks before Christmas are called Advent

- Where we **enter into** that waiting with Israel—that hope (that sustained them)
 - We **identify with** their need to be saved & inability to save themselves
- **Celebrate** the arrival of hope in Jesus

But Christianity has two great arrivals... Christmas is not an end, but a beginning

- **Advent is not only about looking back—but looking forward**
- Christmas is about more than Bethlehem...

And we also can do more than merely identify with Israel's longing—we also are truly longing

- Can't we relate to Israel's condition as described by God here: **Isaiah 1:5b-6**, NLT

Though forgiveness of sins was brought to us in the Cross (1st Advent), we still (personally and on a global scale) experience the grinding and blinding effects of sin

- Sickness, perversion, broken relationships, oppression, evil, death
- These are part of our common daily experience
- In many ways we still feel like **those who live in a land of deep darkness...** (Isaiah 9:2b)

What is going on?

You see, the salvation that has been brought to us in Christ is unfolding, or exists, in three tenses:

- We **have been** fully saved from the **penalty** of sin
- We **are being** daily saved from the **power** of sin
- We **will be** ultimately saved from the **presence** of sin (and all its affects)
 - = Second Advent
 - And until that time, we find ourselves needing to cling to **hope**
 - **Christianity has two great arrivals... Christmas is not an end, but a beginning (looking forward)**

If we look to our text again we see that the first Advent has brought us much—and **there is much yet to come...**

- **Isaiah 9:2 & 4**, NLT (light and freedom)
- **Isaiah 9:6**, NLT (God with us) (we have peace with God)
- **Isaiah 9:7**, NLT (They kingdom come, Thy will be done)

Looking at the world there is much that would cause us despair... But Jesus is coming again!

- There is more to hope for
- **If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.** (1 Corinthians 15:19)
- **Psalms 42:5**, NASB

Because the First Advent has happened, we have great hope for the 2nd

- **Romans 15:4**, NASB
- Even though things in this life can be hard—it will not always be this way... we live in hope
- **Romans 8:18-25**, NLT

Christmas is a time where we press into this hope

God will remove **the cloud of gloom**, the shadow of death that hangs over the earth. He will swallow up death forever! The Sovereign Lord will wipe away all tears. In that day the people will proclaim, "This is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation!" -Isaiah 25:7-9 (NLT)

Rejoice in what has been brought to us—hope confidently in what will be brought to us in Jesus

I pray that God, the source of **hope**, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with **confident hope** through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13, NLT)

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the **hope of His calling**, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. (Ephesians 1:18-19a)