

The Bible Hope

(Front Cover):

Inside Page Below:

Introduction

1. Hope for life
2. Why hope from the Bible?
3. What's in it for me? Immortality and so much more!
4. Abraham's hope – Promises for you too
5. David's hope in Psalms
6. Isaiah's visionary hope
7. Hope in Jesus
8. Return of Jesus to the earth
9. Paul's hope of Israel
10. The Kingdom of God
11. Resurrection
12. Hope in Revelation – visions & songs
13. What must I do to be saved?
14. A brief history: Who we are



www.thebiblehope.org

Copyright© 2011 by the Christadelphians of Lombard, IL. USA
Published and printed in the USA

Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, Copyright© 1973,
1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

Introduction

The Bible is full of hope.

From promises to prophecies, the Bible is eternally hopeful. “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” (Jer 29:11). The Bible gives incredibly detailed descriptions about eternal life beginning with the promises to Abraham and David, to the hopeful visions of Isaiah. It’s a free gift from God and centered on the “kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12).

This book is the result of a unique process. It was not written by one person, but instead, collectively, by our church members. No paid ministers or professionals were involved in writing or proofreading. We had already made www.thebiblehope.org our official church website and determined to write a book to further share our great Bible Hope. We agreed on sub-topics and structure, wrote during the week and proofed together during our normal adult Sunday school class. The process proved to be challenging, energizing, stimulating and very rewarding. It helped promote personal Bible study among our members for each of these studies. We hope you enjoy the fruit of our work.

This short book is not intended to provide exhaustive answers to all questions about eternal life in the Bible. Nor does it aim to give rebuttal to differing opinions about the Bible. You may be surprised how scripture provides a hope that is different from what most Christians believe. Our hope is that these words will prompt readers to do additional Bible study about God’s incredible promises. Jesus Christ is coming back to earth as King to set up his long-awaited Kingdom. The good news is that you are invited to participate with other faithful believers and inherit eternal life.

“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

Romans 15:4

February 2011
Lombard, IL Christadelphians (Brethren in Christ)

“For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. All go to one place; all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth?”

Ecclesiastes 3:19-21

Hope for life

Hope makes all the difference.

A wise teacher once asked a promising student a simple question: “What are your plans for life?” The student answered that he planned to work hard in high school to get good grades in order to

get into one of the better universities. The teacher commended her student for planning ahead and then said, "And then what." He told her what he knew about college and how he hoped to earn a four year degree in business in order to get a good job. The teacher gave a positive nod and again said, "And then what." The student thought for a moment and then said that he would like to get a job in management in the advertising field so he could earn a good living. The teacher predictably followed up again, "And then what." He was ready this time and said that he would like to get married and have a family, buy a house and get promoted at work. "And then what", she said. The student now gave thought to areas beyond where he was comfortable. He gradually said that he would like to earn enough money to retire early, travel with his wife and enjoy hobbies like golf. "And then what" came the expected response. The young man said that he would like to age gracefully and in good health, spend plenty of time with his grandchildren and dabble with inventions in his final days. His teacher pushed the envelope again and asked, "And then what." The student had no more plans beyond these and so he replied that after all of these things were done, he supposed he would just die. That's when the wise teacher played her final card by asking, "And then what!"

Do you relate better to the teacher or the student in this story? Does it really matter what you believe? Why should anyone spend time hoping for the future when life today is so good for so many? Knowing that so many religions teach opposite eternal rewards, why invest anything into something so uncertain? Who knows what THE Bible hope is anyway?

Why hope in any afterlife?

About 3,000 years ago, the wisest and richest man in the world was king of Israel. He built an empire with a strong military and key foreign alliances. He wrote 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. He was known for having a kingdom of peace and built the greatest temple ever to the Lord God of



Israel. The king became great and his wisdom and fame spread to peoples far away. Kings and queens traveled vast distances to see if the amazing news they had heard about him could be true. The king enjoyed life and personally had 1,000 wives and concubines to keep him happy. Whatever he wanted he got, and he didn't hold back from any pleasure. He also worked hard and built incredible buildings and fortified cities. He designed innovative water systems and planted all kinds of fruit trees and gardens. Indeed, life was very good for the king we know as Solomon.

Yet despite having everything imaginable, Solomon grew old and unsatisfied. He wrote in his latter days: *"Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them; I kept my heart from no pleasure...Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had spent in doing it, and again, all was vanity and a chasing after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun"* (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11). Solomon recorded his final thoughts and advice for his subjects in a book in the Bible called Ecclesiastes. That's where he reveals how his entire outlook on life, and eternal life, changed when he grew old.

You may not be old in the chronological sense, but everyone can relate to Solomon and learn from his wisdom and unique experiences. He probably didn't have the same kinds of problems that you have, but he did have one big problem we all have in common. Solomon was mortal and knew he would die. Here are some of the wise lessons he left to his people regarding his mortality:

But whoever is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. The living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing....even the memory of them is lost (Ecc 9:4-5).

Just as you do not know how the breath comes to the bones in the mother's womb, so you do not know the work of God, who makes everything (Ecc 11:5).

Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment (Ecc 11:9).

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil (Ecc 12:13-14).

What if I don't believe in God

It is said that there are no atheists in foxholes. This was a common saying in WWII when soldiers would turn to God when desperate for help. When their life was on the line, even an atheist would turn to God because they would be desperate and have nothing to lose. Of course, the assumption is that once these same soldiers were safe and out of the foxhole, they would no longer need to believe in a Creator. In fact, it's a sad commentary on our American society that there is a Freedom from Religion Foundation that has erected a monument to "Atheists in Foxholes" because of its opposition to the statement of "no atheists in foxholes!"



While millions of people claim to not know any God, He certainly knows you. The Creator of the universe knew you before you were even born (Jer 1:5). He knows each of us inside and out and He helped piece you together in your mother's womb (Ps 139:13-15). Every hair on your head is numbered and known to God (Matt 10:30). God called you to follow Him, His Son, and His plan of salvation. Why else are you reading this

book? God doesn't change His mind and He has a purpose for you. God is actually giving you the greatest hope that anyone has ever received (Eph 4:4). You were called to inherit a blessing, in fact, the most wonderful gift ever given (1 Pet 3:9). God has a plan for the Earth to be filled with Godly people who want to be with Him. Our Heavenly Father has an incredible future for you, *"plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope"* (Jer 29:11).

There is a story about a science class that had a discussion about God's existence. The teacher presented the following logic: "Has anyone in this class heard God speak?" Nobody answered. "Has anyone in this class touched God?" Again, nobody spoke. "Has anyone in this class seen God?" When nobody spoke for the third time, he simply stated, "Then there must be no God." One young student thought for a second, and then asked for permission to reply. Curious to hear this bold student's response, the teacher granted it, and the student stood up and asked the following questions of his classmates: "Has anyone in this class heard our teacher's brain?" Silence. "Has anyone in this class touched our teacher's brain?" Absolute silence. "Has anyone in this class seen our teacher's brain?" When nobody in the class dared to speak, the student concluded, "Then, according to our teacher's logic, it must be true that our teacher's brain does not exist!"

We all need hope

Death is not a subject most people enjoy discussing. We make plans for the future in nearly every way possible, except when it comes to our own death. Do you have a will? Have you bought a gravesite plot or a tombstone? How about a casket? Have you even thought about any of these in the past five years? If you're like most people the answer is probably no. And you don't like to think about anything related to dying either, do you? Why would you, it's a negative, scary, unknown thought for many people.

Yet, this is the reason that every person on earth needs to have hope. Think about someone you know who *acts* like they have no hope. Are they happy or pessimistic? Are they content, or more like Eyore in Winnie the Pooh? Is each new day vibrant for them, or unsatisfying? Do they enjoy life, or feel anger towards others who act hopeful. Are they thankful, or hurtful? Doesn't it seem that people who live each day without hope *act* differently than others who have a biblical hope?

It certainly should be obvious because that's what God intended. He gave us hope intertwined with faith to help us avoid despair and learn about His plan for mankind.



Like Solomon, we will all die and then what? Without hope life is not worth living. Hope is one important difference between people and animals.

Solomon taught that God gave mankind an eternal perspective unlike all animals (Ecc 3:11). We are able to think rationally, using evidence to draw conclusions that makes eternal hope realistic. Only blind confidence would steer someone to think that their pet could think the same. Unlike animals, we have hope and we have purpose. Without hope, how can we have meaningful purpose? Without hope, life is meaningless. Without hope, life is meaning less, and less. We shall find that true biblical hope leads us back to the garden in Eden. Back to true earthly bliss. Back to our future.

"Once you choose hope, anything is possible." Quadriplegic Christopher
Reeve

"Everything that is done in the world is done in hope." Dr. Martin Luther
King Jr.

*"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not
seen."* Heb 11:1

The Bible says:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• God called you to hope. Ps 119:49; Eph 4:4• Hope works with faith for a reward. Heb 3:6; Heb 11:1• You need hope for life. Ps 71:14; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pet 1:3

*"For whatever was written in former days was written
for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the
encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope."*
Romans 15:4

Why Hope from the Bible?

Hope from the Bible makes all the difference.

Some philosophers compare the journey of life to climbing a mountain. Religions generally start with mankind at the bottom of the mountain and a map for getting to the top of the mountain. By this thinking, all religions have the same united goal to get to the top of the mountain to receive the same blissful reward. Each religion sees the mountain from a different point of view

and has a unique path to the top. One religion climbs a rocky path that requires a difficult hike and careful planning. Another climbs the mountain up a gradual grassy side with a relatively easy walk. A third religion climbs an icy path with a slippery slope and concern for falling down. A final religion climbs the hardest route to the top of the mountain, straight up the face and needing much training and special equipment. This philosophy answers the challenging question why each religion is different and why each one claims to be correct. From what each one can see, their point of view is clearly correct and others seem incorrect. That's because, as people, we can only see one side of the mountain and lack the ability to see all sides of the mountain (story). By this reasoning, all religions are correct and all lead to the same blissful reward.



Unfortunately, this concept is not true. At least that's what the Bible says. The serpent in Genesis first invented this lie when it told Eve, *"You surely shall not die."* Jesus affirmed the same when he called the serpent *"a liar, and the father of lies"* (John 8:44). Today, many modern humanistic and spiritual ideas continue the age-old fable that we shall not die. It's politically correct, non-judgmental and more popular to think that everyone, everywhere, from all time, will end up at the top of the mountain.

Unfortunately, universal salvation is illogical and unbiblical. The Bible teaches that salvation is exclusive to few people, not many (Matt 22:14). The Bible also gives many details about how there is only one exclusive path to the top of the mountain. No other route will work. There is only one possible path that leads to the ultimate reward and this teaching excludes all other paths. The Bible declares itself to be the only true hope, so why should anyone believe it?

Is the Bible inspired by God?

While the Bible declares itself to be true, it is external, historical and archaeological evidence that makes the case rock-solid. Below are just a few of the many significant reasons for believing that the Bible is uniquely & divinely inspired with God's true hope for mankind.

- The Jewish history & Israel. The Bible and the Jewish people are forever intertwined. Since Abraham became the father of the Jews (Rom 9:7; Heb 11:9), the Bible records Jewish history and prophesy culminating today with the nation of modern Israel. Since the early 20th century, Bible students have witnessed the unprecedented re-gathering of Jews to the land of Israel (ancient Canaan or Palestine). When the UN General Assembly voted to approve the Jewish homeland on November 29, 1947, the Bible came alive as 2,500 year old prophecies proved to be true. Ezekiel 28:25 is one of many specific places that say *"When I gather the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered....then they shall settle on their own soil that I gave to my servant Jacob."* Isaiah continues with another incredible prophesy: *"Who has heard of such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be delivered in one moment? Yet as soon as Zion was in labor she delivered her children"* (Is 66:8). This passage was literally fulfilled on May 14, 1948 when the Jewish leaders declared the revival of modern Israel. There are many, many other prophecies that predict the suffering, scattering and eventual re-gathering again of the Jewish people to the land of Israel (See Deut 30:1-10; Jer 16:14-15; Micah 5:3; Ezek 34:13; Ezek 36:16-38; Ezek 38:8). This example is totally unique among nations in the world and clearly predicted over 2,500 years earlier. No other people can claim such history and living proof of prophecies, which acts as proof that the Bible is true and divinely inspired.
- In June 1967, Israel won what became known as the Six Day war, winning control of the ancient city Jerusalem. To Jews and Bible students, this miracle fulfilled some amazing ancient prophecies about the eternal Jewish capital. *"For God will save Zion (Jerusalem) and rebuild the cities of Judah; and his servants shall live there and possess it"* (Ps 69:35). *"The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel"* (Ps 147:2). The city of Jerusalem is mentioned hundreds of times in the Bible and is noted as chosen by God above all the earth (Ps 132:13-14).
- The Dead Sea Scrolls. The very same year that Israel was approved to be reborn as a nation, a local Bedouin found the first ancient scrolls in the Qumran region of Israel, on the northwest side of the Dead Sea. The story of this discovery is even more fascinating

considering it happened in the middle of Israel's initial war in 1947. These precious scrolls were written over 2,000 years earlier and contained fragments of every book of the Hebrew Bible except the book of Esther. It also contained a relatively intact, complete copy of the book of Isaiah, which was more than 1,000 years older than the previous known copy. This amazing archaeological discovery has added strong evidence to both believers and non-believers that the Bible is truly the inspired word of God. No longer



could any reasonable person disbelieve the historical evidence of the Bible. The unique characteristics of the Bible – such as many authors writing a book over a 2,000-year period – add to the overwhelming proof that only an unreasonable skeptic might deny. Truly we live in an age when “*many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase*” (Dan 12:4). The modern age helps faith-building discoveries like the Dead Sea Scrolls spread good news of God's plan for mankind.

- Resurrection of Jesus Christ. To Christians, there is no more meaningful event than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The entire weight of the Christian faith rests or falls depending on whether Jesus was truly resurrected three days after his crucifixion. The apostle Paul said this himself when he wrote “*if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and...if for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied*” (1 Cor 15:17-19). Two critical facts give credibility to this important belief. First, the historical fact is that the body of Jesus was never found. If his disciples somehow broke through the Roman guard, carried away Jesus' body and hid it, they would have accomplished a bigger miracle than Jesus rising from the dead! Roman guards who let prisoners go free would suffer execution and were known for their extreme professionalism. Many other details regarding the physical resurrection of Jesus (found in the four gospel records) add to the absolute credibility and accuracy of the text. Second, it is historically known that the closest followers of Jesus, known as apostles or disciples, suffered personal martyrdom. Some, such as the apostle James, were executed for their faith (Acts 12:2) shortly after Jesus ascension into heaven. The issue in question is if Jesus' followers did remove his body and hide it in order to build a new church, does it make sense for them to suffer death in order to maintain a deception (Acts 7:54-60; Acts 9:17-23)? Logic says that people would tell the truth and not die if they knew their cause was a lie, and that telling the truth would avoid a terrible death. The fact that Christianity grew *because* of persecution only adds to the belief that Jesus was indeed resurrected from the dead and his words are true.

The Bible Hope is Believable

Hope is mentioned in the Bible over 130 times. “Eternal life”, “everlasting life” and mentions of immortality abound as our great hope in the Bible. It's why Gilbert Beeken once wrote: “Other men see only a hopeless end. The Christian rejoices in an endless hope.” There have been many famous people who believed the Bible to be the Word of God, but probably none more intelligent than Sir Isaac Newton. Arguably the greatest scientist who ever lived, Newton was born in 1642, the same year that Galileo died. Newton discovered the three laws of motion, calculus, the law of gravitation and the composite nature of light—all before the age of 30. The foundations of modern astronomy and physics are still largely based on theories Newton first presented more than 300 years ago. A humble and reclusive figure, Isaac Newton was a Christian who studied the Bible daily and believed that God created everything, including the Bible. He believed that the Bible was true in every respect. Throughout his life he continually tested Biblical truth against the physical truths of science and never observed a contradiction, according to his many biographers. Newton's writings reflected his belief that his scientific work was a method by which to reinforce belief in the authority of the Bible. After he completed his greatest scientific works, he began to devote more and more of his time to researching the Bible, eventually writing a book he believed unlocked the prophecies contained in Daniel and Revelation. The great bulk of his Bible writing went unpublished, as many of Newton's Bible convictions were unpopular in his day because they paralleled those of the early Christian church. Newton is a striking scientific example of one great mind who saw the divine and perfect order found in the Bible.

The Bible, indeed, is THE map book that leads to life. It is our Creator's only divinely inspired book that has been proven reliable and true. Scripture emphasizes that our Heavenly Father has a plan and a purpose for every person and every nation. He is in charge. He did not create our world to be left to chance. He cares for you and gave you hope. *"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope"* (Jer 29:11).

"No sciences are better attested than the religion of the Bible." Sir Isaac Newton

"I know the Bible is inspired because it inspires me." Dwight L. Moody

"All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness." 2 Tim 3:16

The Bible says:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Bible is the only source for eternal life. Heb 4:12; Heb 6:17-19; Is 46:9-10; Deut 18:20-22• The Bible has great evidence for its claims. Rom 8:22-25;• Any eternal hope outside the Bible is not dependable. Eph 2:11-12; Rev 22:18-19

*"Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake;
some to everlasting life."*
Daniel 12:2

What's in it for me? Immortality and so much more!

Hope springs eternal from the Bible.

There was a group of students talking together when one of them asked the others, "Where do you think you go when you die?" The Buddhist friend stated that he believed in reincarnation and that he hoped to become a flying eagle with his rebirth. The Muslim friend acknowledged that he would likely go to hell for a short period, but he hoped to go to Paradise and be with Allah. The Orthodox Jewish friend believed that he would remain unconscious in death until Messiah comes

and then he would be made immortal. The Pentecostal friend believed that he would instantly go to heaven and receive his reward along with many others. Finally, the Catholic friend said that due to his not-so-righteous life, he figured he'd go to Purgatory when he dies and wait to be prayed up to heaven by one of his relatives! Yes, that was really his plan.

The Bible has a lot to say about immortality. Since Adam and Eve first sinned, mankind has been seeking for ways to escape the reality and shortness of our lives. Fortunately, our Creator has set eternity in our hearts (Ecc 3:11), allowing you to think about what happens to you after you die. This hope of immortality is reflected throughout the Bible:

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23).

"Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47).

"And this is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life" (1 John 2:25).

"And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God" (Job 19:25-26).

"For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality" (1 Cor 15:53).

Doesn't everyone have an immortal soul?

Actually, no. In fact, only one man is currently immortal and that is Jesus (1 Tim 6:16). Every other person – past and present – is mortal and looks forward to being made immortal. The Bible gives great emphasis to the nature of man and how we are merely composed of dust. From the beginning (Gen 2:7, 3:19), God tells his creation that man is dust and he shall return to dust. We are the clay (Is 64:8). We are of the earth, earthly (1 Cor 15:47). We will return to dust when the Almighty takes back His spirit (Job 34:13-14). We are but dust and ashes (Gen 18:27). The wise king Solomon tells us what happens when we die: *"the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath (spirit) returns to God who gave it"* (Ecc 12:7).



Perhaps surprisingly, the words 'immortal' and 'soul' do not occur together anywhere in the Bible. This is in contrast to most other religions, and even Christian interpretations of the Bible. For whatever reason, it seems that many people continue to believe the serpent's lie: *"You shall surely not die."* One reason is that most Christians misunderstand how the Bible defines the word 'soul'. The common belief is expressed like this: Soul = Spirit. But the

Biblical definition differs by declaring: Soul = Body + Spirit. Understand the difference? The soul is not a spiritual or invisible part of a person, but the entire person including the body and spirit. Consider the following evidence regarding 'Soul' in scripture:

- Many modern translations use the word 'you' or 'person' or 'lives' in place of the Hebrew/Greek word for 'Soul'. A good example is from Ezek 18:4 which says *"the soul that sins shall die"* in KJV, but *"the person who sins shall die"* in NIV.
- Of the hundreds of times the Hebrew word *nephesh* (soul) is used in the Bible, the vast majority are used regarding the soul dying. Souls are destroyed (Ezek 22:27; Lev 23:30; Ps 22:29; Josh 11:11). God can destroy the soul (Matt 10:28).
- *Nephesh* (soul) is also translated as "corpse" or "dead body" in Num 9:6.
- The first passage in the Bible with "soul" is Gen 2:7 where *"the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being (soul/nephesh)"*. This sets the precedent throughout scripture for using the word "soul" better as 'a person'. Soul = Body + Spirit (or breath of life from God).
- 'Soul' and 'spirit' can be divided (Heb 4:12). Our soul is not the same as our heart/spirit (Matt 22:37).

- The Bible uses a phrase “*asleep in Christ*” to describe how Godly believers will remain unconscious after death, waiting for their resurrection (1 Cor 15:6, 18; 1 Thes 4:13-15; 2 Pet 3:4; Ps 103:14-16).

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* was one of the earliest known writings in ancient Mesopotamia. That story is about the quest to become immortal and how all mankind is bound to die as mortal. Ultimately the poignant words addressed to Gilgamesh in the midst of his quest foreshadow the end result: “The life that you are seeking you will never find. When the gods created man they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping.” Surprisingly, this conclusion parallels the same summary given throughout the Bible.



What good is immortality?

In Greek mythology, Sisyphus was a king who was eternally punished by being compelled to roll a huge rock up a steep hill. Unfortunately, before he could reach the top of the hill, the rock would always roll back down, forcing him to begin again and again and again. Sisyphus was fortunate to gain immortality and live forever, but his quality of life wasn't exactly what he had in mind. Happily, those who inherit eternal life don't need to worry about such problems, but what is it we will do with infinite time on our hands?

Is your great hope to sit on your own cloud, playing a harp and doing nothing for eternity? Is it to rest aimlessly with no purpose and no meaning? What are disciples of Christ promised besides the *quantity* (longevity) of eternal life? What is the *quality* of eternal life that makes every personal sacrifice absolutely worthwhile? The Bible has answers that may surprise you. In chapter 10 we will learn that the Kingdom of God will be on earth and will give Biblical evidence of a 1,000-year time period called the Millennium. Here's what we have to look forward to as our reward on earth:

- We shall be “*kings and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth*” (Rev 5:10). We will have secondary authority to reign over, and teach, the remaining mortals. This parallels Christ's parable where the faithful servants were rewarded with five or ten cities to rule over (Luke 19:12-19).
- There will be universal peace throughout the earth. The sign in front of the United Nations about never learning war anymore will be fulfilled (Is 2:2-4). All modern weapons will be destroyed (Hosea 2:18; Ezek 39:9). Jerusalem, the city of peace, will finally command peace as the capital of the world and center to all nations (Zech 9:10; Micah 4:1-4).
- There will be plenty of food for all peoples and no famine or hunger (Ezek 36:29-30; Is 49:10; Rev 7:16). Our reward involves a return to an agricultural society with the ground yielding its full fruit and no more thorns and thistles (Micah 4:4; Amos 9:13-15).
- Animals will be peaceful, just as we imagine they were in the Garden in Eden (Is 11:6-9; Is 35:9; Is 65:25). All animals will be vegetarians.
- Sickness and physical handicaps will be obsolete. “*The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame shall leap like a deer; and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy*” (Is 35:5; Is 33:24).
- Those who are counted worthy of eternal life will not sit idly, but will work building houses and cities (Is 60:10; Is 65:21-22; Amos 9:14).
- Unlike the reward for martyrs in the Koran, the Bible says those saved will not have sex or be married in the Kingdom (Luke 20:36). We will recognize people we know today, just as Jesus disciples recognized him after he was resurrected (Luke 24:38-43; John 21:7).
- We will be given a spiritual body with Holy Spirit powers. We will prophesy, see visions and travel instantly so that today's physical limitations will no longer exist (Joel 2:28-32; 1 Cor 15:49-50; Acts 8:39-40).
- We will become like angels (Luke 20:36; Rom 8:23). We will also rule over angels (1 Cor 6:3).
- There will be no tears or sadness anymore (Is 35:10; Is 65:19; Rev 21:4).
- The entire earth will be filled with the glory of God, and peace and righteousness will rule (Numb 14:21; Gal 3:8). “*The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,*

as the waters cover the sea” (Hab 2:14).

The best present ever!

Do you remember the last time you had a birthday and thought you knew when someone was buying you a great gift? You were excited with anticipation as you thought about it a lot and hoped that it would come true. You might have restrained yourself a bit just in case it wasn't true and you ended up with a less-than-expected gift. Did you ever receive a gift that was wildly beyond your imagination? Something that was so incredible that it seemed impossible realistically. (Think Cinderella)



You might recall that Jesus gave such incredible gifts to people that they couldn't have imagined possible. There was the man born blind to whom Jesus gave sight. And the disciples who caught so much fish that they knew it was a great miracle. Remember the man named Legion to whom Jesus gave back his right mind? Or the 5,000 people who received an unexpected meal?

What about the daughter of Jairus, whom Jesus raised from the dead? Or the deaf man near the Sea of Galilee who Jesus cured with his saliva? Can you imagine being severely handicapped physically or mentally, and then receiving healing beyond your expectation?

The most wonderful thing about hope in the Bible is that God has promised to give his faithful children eternal gifts beyond our wildest imagination. We're told that present sufferings and problems are not worth comparing to the amazing glory and reward to be revealed in the future (Rom 8:18-25). The Bible compares the entire earth as if in waiting with birth pangs for the delivery of a heavenly earth. This is the New Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven and fill the whole earth with righteousness and God's glory (Rev 21:2). The most amazing thing is not only that God has promised great gifts to his servants. It's that we are not even capable of understanding how wonderful our future can be!

"I don't want to achieve immortality through my work. I want to achieve it through not dying!" Woody Allen

"We do not know what to do with this short life, yet we want another, which will be eternal." Anatole France

"Strive to enter through the narrow gate...for the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Jesus Christ in Matt 7:13-14

The Bible says:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mankind is presently mortal. Only Jesus is immortal today. Gen 2:17; Job 34:14-15; Ecc 9:5-10; 2 Tim 1:10; 1 Tim 6:16• Immortality is a gift of God. Rom 6:23; John 10:28; 1 Cor 15:53• Additional, unbelievable gifts add to immortality. Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 3:7-8

"And the scripture was fulfilled which says, 'and Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness,' and Abraham was called the friend of God."
James 2:23

Abraham's hope – Promises for you too

Hope in the Bible starts with Abraham

There was a poor woman who was born in Gloucestershire, England. She attended school and found her love for writing fantasy stories. She would often write stories and tell them to her sister. She moved from village to village many times and traveled often. In December 1990, her mother died, and she moved to Portugal in order to teach English as a foreign language. Before her mother's death, she had already begun writing what later became a novel. In Portugal, she married, but the couple separated in 1993. However, she did have a daughter and the two moved to Scotland. During this time, she was diagnosed with clinical depression and often contemplated suicide. She was unemployed and living on welfare. She was able to write and complete her first novel by going to different public cafés with her daughter. Who is this poor woman, and what book did she write? Perhaps you've heard of the young man Harry Potter? Today, J.K. Rowling is worth over \$1 billion, has sold hundreds of millions of books and is famous throughout the world. In October 2010, J. K. Rowling was named 'Most Influential Woman in Britain' by one magazine, thus completing her very unlikely road from extreme rags to extreme riches.



Abraham was one of the greatest rags-to-riches stories in the Bible. He wasn't known to be homeless or very poor, but God called Abraham to leave the country of Ur (modern Iraq) and go to an unknown land (Gen 12:2). He had been well off, living among many friends and family, and was already 75 years old at the time. Ur was known to be a large, metropolitan, wealthy, progressive and idolatrous city. It was basically like God telling a professional in New York City to move to Greenbow, Alabama! Not exactly a great career move, and not attractive to anyone

who enjoys the fine food, entertainment and business opportunities of a major population center. But Abraham obeyed, in faith, and began his journey away from the negative spiritual influences of his own father (Josh 24:2). He went from a spiritual life of rags to a faith filled with eternal riches.

The First Gospel Message

If you read your Bible, where would you say is the first place we read about the Gospel (good news) message? Some might look to Jesus' first preaching campaign after being tempted in the wilderness. Others might question if John the Baptist was the one to first preach the gospel, since he proclaimed the "way of the Lord" and "the kingdom of heaven at hand" (Matt 3:2). Still others might point to one of the Old Testament prophets who predicted the coming of Messiah. Surprisingly, we find the answer an unexpected quote by Paul: *"And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations shall be blessed in you'"* (Gal 3:8). To learn more about Abraham and the original gospel message, we must look 2,000 years before Christ to the man who became the Father of both Jews and Arabs.

Because of Abraham's incredible faith and actions, God blessed him above all peoples of his day. In fact, God repeated his messages to Abraham so that we can count these blessings as God's unwavering promises. Here are God's amazing promises of hope, first delivered to Abraham:

- 1) Abraham would be the father of a son (Gen 15:4). Not only would he be the father of one son, he would also become the father of a chosen son named Isaac when Abraham was 100 years old (Gen 21:4-5)! God promised to establish all of his blessings through Isaac, the chosen child (Gal 4:28). It was through Isaac, that people began to recognize that he was, indeed, the one 'blessed of the Lord'.
- 2) Abraham would be the father of many peoples. God said he would multiply Abraham's descendants to be as numerous *"as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand that is on the seashore"* (Gen 22:17). This promise has been fulfilled, as Abraham became the father of hundreds of millions of Jews and Arabs.
- 3) Abraham would be the father of a promised descendant. Though Isaac became Abraham's child of promise, God said that kings and nations would come from Abraham.

The Bible clearly points out that Jesus became the ultimate child of Abraham, fulfilling God's promise (Gen 22:16-18; Gal 3:14-16; John 8:53-56). Jesus would be the one chosen seed, who would live to make all nations a blessing.

- 4) Abraham was promised a special land to inherit. God repeated this promise several times (Gen 12:7; Gen 13:15; Gen 15:18) to confirm how secure and eternal this promise is. Yet, the Bible provides historical details about where Abraham lived, and how he did *not* inherit the land. So what happened? Hebrews 11:8-16 clarifies for us that Abraham looked forward to the ultimate land reward, a country that God has prepared for him. And not only to Abraham, but to all who have been baptized into Christ and are accounted as "*heirs according to the promise*" (Gal 3:27-29). The modern land of Israel is part of the special property God promised to Abraham, yet to be completely fulfilled.
- 5) Abraham was promised eternal blessings. Once again, God made promises to Abraham that last forever. God gave Abraham an everlasting covenant as a witness to fulfill his promise. God asked Abraham to accept his offer by being circumcised and Abraham is thought to be the first person ever circumcised. In the New Testament book of Romans, it's said that baptism and faith in Jesus Christ make a person a spiritual Jew. This supersedes the covenant of circumcision so that baptism now leads to the same eternal blessings promised to Abraham (Gen 17:7; Rom 4:9-12; Rom 6:4).

The promises to Abraham wouldn't be important to anyone today if they are obsolete or meant only for Abraham. But the Bible gives ample evidence that the promises to Abraham are actually the same as the New Testament gospel. In fact, the word 'gospel' means 'good news', and includes the promises given to Abraham and repeated by Jesus (Matt 6:10; Luke 13:28). One of the best definitions of the gospel is found in Acts 8:12 where it says they were "*preaching the good news (gospel) about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.*"

Capital of the World

There's a saying in retail business that the most important differentiator is location, location, location. In the world today, there is one place on earth that is the most valuable piece of real estate and it's not for sale. It's a very small area, outside the tropics and wouldn't be in such demand without its incredible history. It is an area within a medium-sized city and much of that area looks more backward than forward. It's a holy site for Jews, Christians and Muslims and has been the location of many, many wars. The location is called Mount Moriah, or better known as the Temple site in Jerusalem.

The Bible introduces us to Moriah in Gen 22:2 when Abraham is told by God to offer his son Isaac as a burnt offering on that mountain. Of course God spares Isaac at the last moment and Abraham receives more blessings for having obeyed God. Later, King David offered a sacrifice at the same location in order to appease God and end a pestilence on the land (2 Sam 24:18). David bought that piece of property especially for that emergency sacrifice, and it has remained the most precious place on earth. A few years later, King Solomon began building a glorious temple to the Lord God of Israel and he picked the very same location to build (2 Chron 3:1). Solomon's temple wasn't particularly large, but it was world-renowned and in keeping with what his father, David, had intended.

In the future, there may well be a temple built by Jesus and his servants on that same site (Ezek 40-48). Or it may be that Jesus will rule from that site without a temple, as we know temples today (Rev 21:22; 1 Pet 2:5; Ps 40:6-8). Either way, the faithful who inherit Abraham's promises will follow in Abraham's footsteps. Like Abraham, we will leave the hopelessness of this world and join the kingdom of God on earth, New Jerusalem. Like Abraham, we will go out in faith to a place God promises will be perfect for us. Like Abraham, we will realize that we are only strangers and pilgrims on earth, and our eternal hope lies in being connected to Abraham and his seed Jesus. Like Abraham, we must have faith in God and His promises, to inherit the blessings of the gospel first preached to Abraham (Gal 3:8). What a wonderful hope Abraham had, and we have too.

"All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all that I have not seen."
Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Lack of faith in God is the source of most of society's troubles."
Albert E. Ribourg

*"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not
seen."*
Hebrews 11:1

The Bible says:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• God chose Abraham because of his great faith. Heb 11:8; Rom 4:9-16• God gave Abraham amazing promises. Gen 12:1-3; 13:4-7; 17:1-8; 22:15-18• Those who are faithful can inherit the same promises as Abraham. Gal 3:27-29, 4:28

*“Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days
of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”*
King David in the 23rd Psalm

David's hope in Psalms

Hope in the Bible comes alive in David's Psalms

Who am I? I became the king of Scotland when I was only 13 months old and legally assumed full control when I was 15 years old. When I was 35, I became King of both England and Scotland. The following year, I added Ireland to become King of Great Britain. I was a shrewd, flawed ruler known for extended peaceful rule. I was a poet. I died at 58, but not before agreeing to do something that would make my name immortal in literature. When I was 38, I commissioned a new version of the Bible that came to be known as the Authorized Version. I picked 47 scholars from the Church of England to produce a new Bible version, which also reinforced official church doctrine. My 1611 Bible is still widely in use 400 years later and I am...King James.

Royalty has its privileges. Kings and Queens generally rule by their own rules, and are able to have extreme control over their subjects. Amazingly, quite a few monarchies exist today with many nations still having a King or Queen as head of state. Many other nations have a dictator who rules, sometimes outside of the law, and sometimes changing the law to fit the leader. Very few modern nations have a theocracy form of government, though Vatican City is one well-known example. Yet this is exactly the form of government that King David led, and his subjects enjoyed. Under David's guidance, Israel prospered into a regional superpower and the people realized a small portion of what the Kingdom of God will be like in the future. Despite his glaring flaws, David became a man *“after God's own heart”* and he led Israel in Godly worship and a glimpse of righteousness.



Because David came from a humble family life (1 Sam 16:11), God picked him to lead his chosen people as their shepherd. David was a positive contrast to King Saul, whom God removed due to disobedience. David proved to be a great man of faith as he fought against Goliath while still a youth. David knew that God had promised him to be king (1 Sam 16:13) and therefore he couldn't die in battle before being made king. Having life-or-death faith in the God of Israel, and in His promises, led David's focus in the path for life. David was a great man of God, who developed a deep eternal hope. David's understanding built upon the promises to Abraham, and God's Spirit provided David with better insights about the future Messiah and the Kingdom of God.

What did David write in his Psalms?

David was known as the “sweet psalmist” as he was a musician from his youth. David wrote almost half of the psalms in the Bible and his son, Solomon, wrote 1005 songs (1 Kings 4:32). The difference between most writers and David is that David was truly inspired by God to declare His will. We know this because David was a prophet and many of his songs contained prophecies about the greater son of David, Jesus (Ps 22:1, 6-18; Luke 24:44). Listed below are some of David's expressions declaring his vivid hope for eternal life in the ultimate house of God:

- David clearly believed that he would live again after he died. He wrote: *“God is to us a God of deliverances; and to God the Lord belong escapes from death”* (Ps 68:20). And *“Thou wilt prolong the king's life; his years will be as many generations. He will abide before God forever”* (Ps 61:6-7). See also Ps 16:9-11; Ps 133:3; Ps 145:1
- David had a special connection with a future house (temple) of God. He lived in a glamorous house himself and wanted the place of worship to be worthy of his Creator (2 Sam 7:2). David wasn't able to build this himself, but he did amply provide provisions so

that his son, Solomon, would be able to build a special house for the God of Israel (1 Chron 22:1-16). David longed for this when he said, *“One thing I have asked from the Lord, that I shall seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to meditate in His temple”* (Ps 27:4). See also Ps 23:6 & Ps 15

- David stood in awe at the eternal promises of God. In Ps 84:10 David said, *“For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand outside. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord than dwell in the tents of the wicked.”* David understood God’s amazing promises and how any position in the Kingdom of God would be far beyond his dreams. No one who serves the Son of David in the Kingdom will be disappointed.
- David understood that his eternal reward would be on the earth. He wrote something so important that Jesus quoted it as one of Beatitudes on the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said, *“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”* This quote from Matt 5:5 came directly from the 37th Psalm where David also said *“Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart.”* David’s faith and hope combined to give him confidence that his reward would be eternal life on earth.

Where did David go when he died?

David was a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22) and one who was chosen because of his Godly spirit. After he was anointed to be King, *“the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward”* (1 Sam 16:13). David possessed Holy Spirit powers as a warrior and as a writer of God’s decrees. We also know that David prophesied about Jesus and looked forward to his day (Luke 20:42-44; Acts 1:16; Acts 2:25). Of all the righteous and faithful people in the Bible, isn’t it obvious where David went after he died? Actually, the answer given in the Bible is not what most would expect. In fact, to most Christians it is the opposite.

The prophet Ezekiel predicted that David would rise again in the resurrection and rule as shepherd. Part of this prophesy points toward Jesus as the ultimate Son of David, but the primary fulfillment is literally the man David:

“They will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them. And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever” (Ezek 37:24-25).

Peter adds to this when he said plainly, *“For it was not David who ascended into heaven”* (Acts 2:34). Peter clarifies that King David not only died, but he was buried and remains buried in his tomb, waiting for the resurrection (Acts 2:29). Combined with the earlier explanation of ‘asleep in Christ’, (see 1 Cor 15:6, 18; 1 Thes 4:13-15; 2 Pet 3:4; Ps 103:14-16) we now know that when David died, he fell asleep, and became unconscious. Paul makes this point crystal clear when he says, *“For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers, and underwent decay”* (Acts 13:36). Paul adds that David’s death was different than Jesus’ in that while Jesus was resurrected, David stayed in the grave asleep. This parallels the words of Jesus when he said that no man has ever ascended into heaven (John 3:13). Finally, the Hall of Faith chapter (Hebrews 11:39-40) tells us that David and all other righteous believers have not yet received their reward, because they must wait until the judgment and resurrection of life. Therefore, when the Bible says that David died, it means exactly that and nothing more. David died in hope of resurrection and eternal life on earth.

Promises to David

David was a child of promise. From an early age, he made the right choices and trained for greatness. He used his idle time as a shepherd to become an accomplished musician. He



defended

his sheep and managed to kill both a lion and a bear (1 Sam 17:36). David killed a giant fighter, who was undefeated and very experienced. David fled from Saul for years, comforted by his faith that he would be the next king of Israel. After he was anointed King and midway through his reign, David was

an incredible success with his spiritual life, leadership, military conquests, and growing family. David was fabulously rich and accumulating new cities and buildings with his wealth. He was on top of the world and knew that the God of Israel freely gave him all of his gifts. This is the time when David decided that the ark of God deserved to have a majestic home.

He proposed to build a fabulous temple to house the ark, but God had other plans for David. Instead of David giving God a gift, God gave David many gifts. God promised several blessings to David, similar to the same promises given to Abraham, including:

1. God promised to give David a son who would be king after him. He already had other sons, but now was promised a special child who would be king (2 Sam 7:12; Ps 132:10-11).
2. God promised to give David a greater son, Messiah, who would reign as king. Jesus, himself, claimed to be the promised son of David (Luke 1:31-32; Rom 1:3; Rev 22:16).
3. God promised to give David a son who would build the Temple (house of God) that David so desired. This was particularly soothing for David to know that his spiritual dream project would come true (2 Sam 7:13).
4. God promised that David’s throne would last forever in God’s kingdom (2 Sam 7:16; 2 Sam 23:5). This is the same eternal covenant promise that Abraham received about inheriting the land and the same promise given about Jesus: *“There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness”* (Is 9:7).

Someone once said that promises are like babies: easy to make, hard to deliver. With people this is very true, but with God, promises are guaranteed. For life. David believed God’s promises and never doubted. He looked forward, in faith and hope, to his eternal reward in God’s ultimate Kingdom. David made sure that his great hope was alive and well through his beautiful Psalms.

“God never made a promise that was too good to be true.” Dwight L. Moody

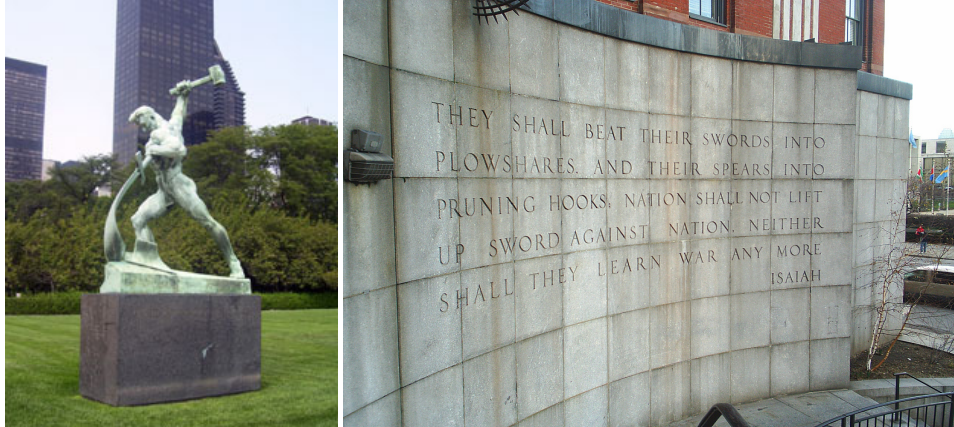
“No pillow so soft as God’s promise.” Author Unknown

“In the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.”
Titus 1:2

The Bible says:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• David wrote about his hope for eternal life. Ps 68:20; Ps 61:6-7• David never received his reward, but still waits, in sleep, for the resurrection. Acts 2:25; Acts 13:22• David received great promises, which we also participate in. Is 9:7; Ezek 37:24-25

*"Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength;
They will mount up with wings like eagles,
They will run and not get tired,
They will walk and not become weary."
Isaiah 40:31*

Isaiah's Visionary Hope



Hope in the book of Isaiah has changed the world.

The United Nations was established post WWII as a world authority to manage international conflicts and end war. The U.N. has been headquartered in New York City since 1951 and many nations have given it historical symbols of peace. Surprisingly, it was the Soviet Union in 1959 that donated a unique sculpture with a quote from Isaiah 2:4 that says: "Let Us Beat Swords Into Plowshares," (above photo). The sculpture is of a workman beating a sword into a plowshare and bears the Biblical quote from 28 centuries ago. Interesting, this gift inspired another monument not located on U.N. property, but positioned across the street to appease any nations that would be opposed to this Biblical quote. It quotes the full Isaiah verse (above) and is often misquoted as being engraved on one of the U.N. buildings. Appropriately, this site is now simply called "the Isaiah Wall." It says: *"They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."*

Isaiah was a major prophet who was quoted more times in the New Testament than any other Old Testament prophet. Jesus quoted Isaiah many times and alluded to his writings as well (Matt 5:4; 11:5; 12:18-21; 15:7-9; 21:5). Isaiah's name means "salvation of the Lord" and his message parallels that of all prophets who acted as God's spokesmen to the people. The nation of Israel was steeped in sin at the time, and Isaiah had the unpopular job of rebuking and exhorting the people to change and obey Jehovah, the God of Israel. He gave a doom-and-gloom outlook for the people and their country, if they continued in their wayward ways. Isaiah saw the sins of idolatry and declared God's will to repent for nearly 50 years. It was a challenging job for any man of God as he predicted one disaster after another.

However, Isaiah was also blessed to announce some of the most amazing visions of the future. Of all the books in the Bible, Isaiah gives more specific, beautiful and unique pictures of the future Kingdom of God. The Gospel of Isaiah – as it should be known – presents the true Bible hope regarding the King, the Kingdom and the eternal glory to be revealed. It is an uplifting prediction about all the goodness that God intends for mankind on His earth. It's a rare look into the reality of God's promises.

Isaiah & The King

The book of Isaiah introduces all hopeful people to the personality of the Messiah. Other books in the Bible talk about what the Messiah will do, but Isaiah gives insights to His feelings and emotions (See Is 53). Isaiah is contemporary with the great King Hezekiah, who became a savior to his people. Hezekiah overcame incredible hurdles through his Godly faith, and became a forerunner of the Messiah. Jesus comes alive in Isaiah. We learn about his virgin birth and his sacrificial death. We learn that salvation comes through the Servant-Messiah. Great expectations are given about the future arrival of the Savior, and his miraculous powers. Some of Isaiah's predictions were fulfilled during Jesus' time on earth, and others will be completed at His return. Here are a few glimpses into Isaiah's pictures of the future Messiah, King of Israel, and the whole earth:

"Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.' The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

"Of the increase 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" (Isaiah 9:7).

"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn" (Is 61:1-2).

"The LORD has made proclamation to the ends of the earth: 'Say to the Daughter of Zion, 'See, your Savior comes! See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.' 'They will be called the Holy People, the Redeemed of the LORD; and you will be called Sought After, the City No Longer Deserted" (Is 62:11-12).

Isaiah & the Kingdom

Like virtually every prophet in Israel, Isaiah led a ministry of peaks and valleys. Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah and concluded with evil Manasseh. Isaiah lived at the time when the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by Assyria and the people were removed from the land. He predicted the fall of the southern kingdom, Judah, as well and this was ultimately fulfilled by Babylon in 586 BC. Isaiah was tasked for many years with unpopular messages condemning the godlessness of the Jewish

people. He had a job nobody else would want until the righteous King Hezekiah began to rein. He literally cleaned up the country from its idolatry and Hezekiah's kingdom became a symbol of the future Kingdom of God. The book of Isaiah is closely connected to Hezekiah's kingdom and points forward to Jesus as king of the greater Kingdom. Regarding this promised kingdom, Isaiah gives many gleams of hope to encourage the troubled people. Those who have faith in Abraham's promises and in Isaiah's predictions are sure to inherit the good news in Isaiah about God's future kingdom. Isaiah said:



*"The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead
them..."*

*They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the
waters cover the sea"
(Is 11:6,9).*

*"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.
Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert....
And the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing;
everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them,
and sorrow and sighing will flee away" (Is 35:5-6, 10).*

***"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth.
The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.
But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create,
for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy.
I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people;
the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more...
They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune;
for they will be a people blessed by the LORD, they and their descendants with
them.
Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear.
The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox,
but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain," says the LORD"* (Isaiah 65:17-25).**

Isaiah is considered the greatest of all Hebrew prophets. He left a bright gleam of hope that is just as relevant today as it was in ancient times. Isaiah wrote about a great King and His kingdom to come. He filled in the gaps in the promises to Abraham and David with amazing detail and emotion. He prophesized about salvation in the promised Messiah and introduces us to the personality of Jesus Christ. Thanks to Isaiah, we have a living hope that can last forever.

*"We could never learn to be brave and patient, if there were only joy in the world."
Helen Keller*

*"The Old Testament teems with prophecies of the Messiah, but nowhere is it intimated that that
Messiah is to stand as a God to be worshipped. He is to bring peace on earth, to build up the waste
places -- to comfort the broken-hearted."
Olympia Brown*

*"He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears
from all faces; This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his
salvation." (Is 25:8-9)*

The Bible says:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Isaiah gave detailed insight into the Bible hope. Is 11:6-9; Is 35• Isaiah predicted a great hope tied to the coming Messiah, King of Israel. Is 9:7; Is 61:1-2• Isaiah wrote unlike any other about the Kingdom of God. Is 2:2-4; Is 25:6-9; Is 45:18

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."
Acts 4:12

Hope in Jesus

Hope is hopeless without Jesus.

About 1750, a slave trading ship captain had had enough. For years John Newton had participated in the slave trade, treating African slaves as mere units of cargo. He led ships from England to Africa, then across the Atlantic to unload his shipment in the New World. The journey was dangerous and deadly, as often 20% of the blacks on board would die on the inhumane voyage. John Newton transported more than a few shiploads of the 6 million African slaves brought to the Americas in the 18th century. It was a book he found on board - Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ* - which sowed the seeds of his conversion. When a ship nearly sank in a storm, he converted to be a Christian and left sailing to become a minister for the last 43 years of his life. At 82, Newton said, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior." A far greater testimony outlives Newton in the most famous of the hundreds of hymns he wrote. It begins:

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me,
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.*

Jesus Christ was unlike any man who ever lived. He was uniquely Son of Man and Son of God. He was chosen and destined since the foundation of the world (1 Pet 1:20). In fact, he was *"the lamb slain from the foundation of the world"* (Rev 13:8). He was the fulfillment of centuries of prophecies from many different prophets. He was the promised child to Abraham, and the promised King to David. Jesus (Hebrew name Yeshua or Joshua) was central to God's plan for mankind from the very beginning (John 1:1; Heb 1:1-4). God knew that Jesus would be the

savior to the whole world, and he prepared the setting for his Son to conquer the world. God's plan of salvation for mankind has always been centered on Jesus (John 3:16; John 6:27). Without believing in Jesus and His message, all hope is futile.



As the son of a simple carpenter, Jesus' first words in his ministry were to *"repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"* (Matt 4:17). Jesus taught that the poor, handicapped and hungry of the world are more blessed than all others. He gave hope to those who needed it most. He healed the sick and raised the dead. He literally and spiritually fed his followers. He taught as no man taught before. He touched the untouchables of his day. He loved those who were unloved. He cared for those in need. He showed forgiveness to sinners. He led a sinless life as a perfect example. And ultimately, Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice for those who believe in Him.

Why Jesus?

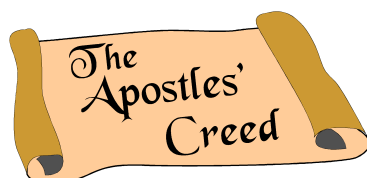
Religion has known many spiritual leaders who claimed divine inspiration. Many people have proclaimed themselves to be specially chosen, often with supposed powers of providence. Some people have even believed that they are the Second Coming of Christ today! They claimed to declare God's will and generally benefited from their self-worship faith. But Jesus was unique in his humility. He taught about his suffering and sacrifice. He knew that he would be crucified. He had faith that he would rise from the dead. Jesus lived an incredibly unique life unlike any other person, through which we have hope:

- Jesus was sinless his entire life (2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:22; Heb 7:26). He was one *"who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin"* (Heb 4:15).
- Grace and truth were revealed in Jesus (John 1:17; Titus 3:6-7). Forgiveness was practiced and preached by Him. Those who believe in Jesus will receive forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43).
- No one needs to fear the devil today thanks to Jesus, who destroyed the Devil through his death (Heb 2:14).
- Jesus was, and is, superior to angels (Heb 1:1-4).
- All things in heaven and on earth are subject to Jesus (1 Cor 15:27; Heb 2:8).
- Jesus was a redeemer to His followers. He provided the way of escape from the curse of death in the Hebrew law (Job 19:25; Titus 2:13-14; Gal 3:13; Col 1:14).
- Jesus provided the way for people to have peace with God. His death and resurrection gave opportunity for all people to have eternal hope (Eph 2:12-13; Gal 3:28).
- Jesus was the perfect representation of God to the people and reflected God's character (Col 1:15; 1 Tim 3:16).
- Jesus is the only way to the Father. He is the only way leading to life. He is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6; John 10:28; John 17:2).
- *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16).

Who was Jesus?

Jesus has frequently been misunderstood. When he was just a baby, Herod thought that he was a threat and tried to kill him (Matt 2:16). Later, some thought that he was either John the Baptist, Elijah or Jeremiah (Matt 16:14). Others didn't understand him when he said people needed to eat his flesh and drink his blood (John 6:60-66). Jewish leaders mistakenly thought that he was born of fornication (John 8:41). Some accused him of being a Samaritan with a demon (John 8:48). They also thought that Jesus was a sinner for breaking the Sabbath (John 7:30). Others didn't know where he was from (John 9:29). Some even thought that Jesus claimed to be God (John 5:18; 10:33).

Believers and non-believers have misunderstood Jesus as well. In 325 AD, the Christian Council of Nicaea voted to teach that Jesus was co-equal and co-eternal with God. The early 'Apostle's Creed' was therefore amended to add what became known as the 'Nicene Creed'. The Roman-led church officially declared that



Jesus was actually the same person as God the Father! Somehow this mystery that Jesus is actually part of God became accepted doctrine to Christians. For the first time, monotheist Christians declared that there is one God in three persons, or a triune God. Why does this matter? Because Jesus said that hope for eternal life is dependent on correctly understanding this relationship. Jesus said: *"Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent"* (John 17:3).

It is vital that we understand that Jesus is the Son of God, and not God the Son. Jesus generally called himself "Son of Man" and he was never called "God the Son." He said that His Father is greater than He and that He (Jesus) was not even 'good' (John 14:28; Mark 10:18). Jesus taught that "God is one" (Not three – Mark 12:28-34) as faithful Jews had believed since Abraham. Jesus prayed to God, his Father and was always subservient to his Father (John 8:28). God raised Jesus from the grave and Jesus ascended to his Father (John 20:17). Clearly, Jesus believed that he was one in spirit with his Father, but not as one God. It's how he could be humble and tempted. It's how he willingly offered himself as a sacrifice as only a human could (Heb 7:26-28).

Jesus' followers learned and applied the same belief about God. Paul believed in one God and, separately, that Jesus is his Son (1 Tim 2:5; 1 Cor 15:24-28; 1 Cor 8:6; 1 Cor 11:3; Eph 4:4-6). Jesus' brother, James, wrote that God cannot be tempted, and yet Jesus was tempted (James 1:13; Heb 4:15). His lead Apostle, Peter, called Jesus "a man" after his resurrection, which would be offensive if Jesus was really God (Acts 2:22). The Bible says God cannot be seen or die, however Jesus was obviously seen and did die (1 Tim 6:16; 1 John 1:1).

The Bible says that believing in Jesus, as the Son of God, is required to be saved (Rom 10:9). *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom 6:23). Thanks be to God for His incredible gift of hope, in Jesus.

"I am a historian, I am not a believer, but I must confess as a historian that this penniless preacher from Nazareth is irrevocably the very center of history. Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history." H. G. Wells, British writer

*"Life with Christ is an endless hope,
without Him a hopeless end."* (Anonymous)

*"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

The Bible says:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No one has any hope for eternal life apart from Jesus. Acts 4:12; Acts 2:32-36; Heb 7:25• Jesus was the only begotten Son of God. Heb 1:1-4; John 3:16• Jesus was the Son of God, but not God the Son. John 17:3; 1 Tim 2:5; 1 Cor 8:6; John 14:28

“This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

Acts 1:11

Return of Jesus to the Earth

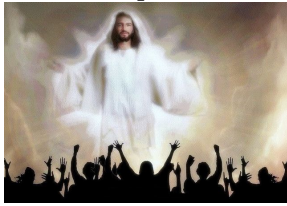
Hope is void without Jesus’ return.

Some people will not realize what happened. Others will notice that people are missing. Some people will watch as people disappear. Cars will crash amid great chaos, as drivers are not found. People on airplanes will suddenly evaporate, leaving only their clothes and jewelry. Everyone in the world will seek for answers while blaming someone, or something. The media will have more questions than answers. This is the opening scene presented in the popular *Left Behind* series, as one interpretation for what will happen when Jesus returns to the earth. While this book (and movie) gives a subjective and entertaining view of what is called the Rapture, the Bible provides a more accurate explanation regarding Jesus’ second coming. The Bible answers some basic questions such as: Why will Jesus return to the earth? When will he return? What will happen when he returns? What signs can we expect before he returns? Where will he return? How will he return? How does this fulfill our Bible hope?

Why will Jesus return to the Earth?

Some people may think that it doesn’t matter if Jesus returns to the earth as long as they are safe in heaven. In an earlier chapter - “What’s in it for me?” - we learned that the true Christian hope is eternal life on earth (Matt 5:5). The Bible teaches that no man is in heaven today (John 3:13), but instead faithful disciples wait for the day of resurrection and judgment. So, why will Jesus

return to the earth? He will return primarily as king to set up his promised kingdom, which will never be destroyed (Dan 2:44). His return will restore the kingdom to Israel, only this time as a perfect theocracy based in Jerusalem (Is 2:2-4). Jesus will fulfill the promises to Abraham and David as the savior of the world. He will come to put an end to this dysfunctional world and introduce peace and righteousness.



Jesus will also return to grant immortality to his 'good and faithful' servants (Matt 25:21). Jesus himself said, *"Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done"* (Rev 22:12). He will judge the living and the dead (resurrected) at one time, as appointed by God (1 Pet 4:5; 2 Tim 4:1; Acts 10:42). The Bible gives repeated direction that faithful believers will receive their reward when Jesus returns and not before (1 Pet 5:4; Dan 12:2; John 5:25-29). The "day of judgment" is frequently described as a time of both reward and punishment (2 Pet 2:9; 3:7; 1 John 4:17; Matt 10:15).

When will Jesus Return?

Wise Bible believers since Christ have tried to solve the Biblical riddle for the date of Jesus return. In the Old Testament, Daniel was able to use his wisdom to determine the year that the Jews would return to Jerusalem from their Babylonian captivity (Dan 9:2). He studied Jeremiah's prophecy and was rewarded with a visit from the angel Gabriel. The Bible also gives many prophetic numbers, and signs, to try to figure out "times and seasons" (Dan 9:24-26; Dan 12:11-12; Rev 11:2; Rev 13:5). Despite many sincere efforts to determine the date of Jesus' return, Jesus taught: *"But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father"* (Matt 24:36). Read that again. During his ministry, even Jesus didn't know the date of his return!

Jesus told his disciples that not only wouldn't they know the date of his return, but that he *"will come at an hour when you do not expect him"* (Matt 24:44). Jesus wants his followers to be ready for his return everyday, and any day. He warned his followers against obsessing over the exact date. He gave parables about being spiritually awake and alert, but not about dates or times (Luke 12:35-40; Acts 1:7; 1 Thes 5:2-5).

What Signs can we expect before Jesus' Return?

Human beings are naturally curious, particularly about the future. Some are concerned about tomorrow's weather, while others think about the futures markets. Jesus' followers asked him what signs to expect at the time of his return and he gave a detailed answer called the Olivet Prophecy, because they were on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem (Matt 24:3). Jesus gave many signs about the "last days" prior to his return including:

- Many false Christ's will come and pretend to be Jesus (Matt 24:5, 23-24).
- There will be many wars, famines and earthquakes (Matt 24:6-7).
- There will be a time of tribulation for all people, including believers (Matt 24:8-10, 21, 29).
- Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies (Luke 21:20) This echoes many passages from Old Testament prophets such as Zech 12:1-3; Zech 14:1-4; Joel 3:11-17
- There will be literal signs in the sun, moon and stars (Matt 24:29).
- Morality will be like the days of Noah, when evil and violence reigned (Luke 17:26-30).
- The Jewish people must say, *"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"* (Matt 23:39). God's chosen people must cry out for Messiah and his salvation.

Disciples of Christ are wise to watch for signs in the nation of Israel. Prophecies such as Psalm 83 identify an invasion of Israel by the surrounding nations in the last days. Also, the ancient proclamation, *"I will bless those who bless you, and curse those who curse you"* (Gen 12:3) still applies today regarding Israel and other nations.

Where will Jesus return?

The Bible gives one clear answer to what location Jesus will return to on earth: Jerusalem. When Jesus ascended to heaven, an angel specifically told his followers, *"This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into*

heaven” (Acts 1:11). He ascended from a special point on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem and other scriptures confirm that this is the location of his return. Zechariah gives an incredibly detailed description regarding Jesus’ return: *“On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south”* (Zech 14:4). This is no surprise since God called Jerusalem his eternal capital and scripture is filled with passages emphasizing this chosen city of peace (Is 24:3; 62:6; Zeph 3:16-20; Zech 8:3; 14:11; Ps 135:21).



How will Jesus return?

Jesus will descend from heaven in the same way that he went to heaven (Acts 1:11). How did he ascend? After his resurrection, human dimensions of time and space no longer limited Jesus. He entered rooms without going through doors (John 20:19). He could disappear in front of people (Luke 24:31). His appearance seemed to change (Luke 24:31; John 21:4, 12). We have additional descriptions in Mark and Luke that Jesus visibly elevated from the earth when he ascended to heaven. His followers actually watched him ascend to heaven! This is the same way that the angel told Jesus’ followers how he would return (Acts 1:11). His return to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem will be a visible event to all peoples. Jesus compared his return to lightening, which is visible from one end of the sky to another (Matt 24:27). He wanted his disciples to know how obvious his return would be, so that they would not be fooled or deceived. *“So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it”* (Matt 24:26). Jesus has not returned invisibly and he hasn’t returned secretly as another person. He is seated at his Father’s side until the time is right, by God’s providence, to return to earth and set up his promised kingdom (Matt 26:64; 2 Thes 1:7, 10; Rev 1:7).

How does this fulfill our Bible hope?

The Bible hope involves immortality, promises, love, peace, kindness, joy and so much more. But the foundation for our hope lies on the foundation of Jesus Christ. If Jesus had not been resurrected, then there would be no Christian hope today (1 Cor 15:17-19). If Jesus doesn’t return from heaven in the future, as he promised, then Christians have an empty faith. The Bible hope cannot be complete until Jesus returns, because all faithful believers will receive their reward at the same time, together. Even great men of faith such as Abraham, Joseph, Moses and David are dead (asleep) today, waiting for their resurrection and reward. *“These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect”* (Heb 11:39-40).

Jesus’ return to set up his kingdom fulfills the promises given to Abraham, David and the prophets. He must return to earth in order to set up his kingdom in Jerusalem. He will return in great glory, with all the angels (Matt 25:31). He will return to fulfill many Bible prophecies and resurrect his faithful followers. Jesus will return because God will send His Son to conclude His ultimate plan to fill the entire earth with the glory of the Lord (Numb 14:21).

“Dream as if you’ll live forever...live as if you’ll die today.”

James Dean

“When Jesus comes, the shadows depart.”

Author unknown

“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.”

1 Thes 4:16

The Bible says:

- Jesus will return to the earth, visibly in Jerusalem. Acts 1:6-11; 1 Thes 4:13-17; Matt 24:27-31
- Jesus gave many signs that will occur before he returns. Matt 24:5-24; Luke 17:22-30
- Jesus must return in order for anyone to receive the reward of immortality. Heb 11:39-40; 1 Cor 15:51-57; John 5:28-29

“For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.”
Acts 28:20

Paul’s Hope of Israel

Paul’s hope is your hope.

During WWII, a group of scientists worked on the Manhattan Project to build the first atomic bomb. The US dropped two of these bombs on Japan in 1945, effectively ending the war. Afterwards, the scientists became concerned that their invention could be misused as part of full-



scale war. They started the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* to educate people about the dangers of atomic or nuclear weapons. In 1947, the magazine printed a Doomsday Clock, set at seven minutes to midnight. They designed this symbol to serve as a visual reminder so that government would not have too much control over nuclear weapons. Ironically, the builders of the first atomic bombs feared the future use of these weapons once they realized the power and destructive force they had created. The scientists changed their beliefs and became the equivalent of converted scientific pacifists. They made a plan and

took action to teach the world the lessons they had learned.

The Apostle Paul is known for having made the greatest conversion in the Bible. He grew up highly educated in the strictest branch of Judaism. Paul learned the letter of the law from the best of the best rabbis in Jerusalem. The book of Acts says that Paul was educated at the feet of the prominent Pharisee, Gamaliel, who was well respected by all (Acts 5:34; 22:3). Paul would have spent his youth learning and studying the Hebrew Bible in preparation for being a scribe, synagogue leader or Rabbi. He was a Roman citizen from Tarsus and had moved to Jerusalem to study. When he was older, Paul knew about Jesus, and his life changed dramatically on a journey to persecute Christians. Jesus stopped Paul in his tracks with a blinding light and told Paul how much his life would change.

In the span of just a few days, Paul changed from being the chief persecutor of early Christians, to being the main proponent for the new faith. What didn't change was his great "hope of Israel", which he kept with him throughout his ministry. Paul's hope was the same as all Jews – to be part of God's kingdom on earth. This would fit with what Abraham, David and Isaiah all experienced. But with his new discovery, Paul now focused on the return of Jesus as Messiah and not his former Jewish expectation of Messiah (1 Thes 1:10; 2:19; 4:14). He wrote: *"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven. ...and the dead in Christ will rise first"* (1 Thes 4:16).

The Just Shall Live by Faith

Protestants credit Martin Luther for changing Christian teaching about faith and works. About 1520, Luther wrestled with church abuses and his own sinfulness. He was taught that faith alone could not save him, but that works were needed as well. He eventually came to the conclusion that this isn't true as he meditated at length on Paul's words in Romans: *"The just shall live by faith"* (Rom 1:17). Luther's discovery and protest against the Catholic Church led to the Reformation in the Middle Ages. Paul's quote from the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk was also repeated in Gal 3:11 to reinforce that no person can be saved by works from the Jewish law. Paul learned and applied the life-saving lessons of grace, forgiveness, faithfulness and righteousness and made these key elements in his teaching. He changed to believe that mankind is justified by faith, and salvation is given by God's grace (Rom 3:28; 5:1-2).

Paul became an ambassador for Christ and a preacher to Gentiles (non-Jews Gal 2:9). He became the key voice that Jesus used to build his church. Prior to Paul, Jesus' followers were reluctant to preach to Gentiles (Acts 10:28) because they were considered physically and spiritually unclean. Jews were not even supposed to eat a meal with Gentiles to avoid spiritual contamination! Since Abraham, the Hebrew law taught that the only way to salvation for men was to be circumcised (Gen 17:9-13; Lev 12:3). Anyone who would not be circumcised was considered unworthy of God's promises and excommunicated (Gen 17:14). Paul's travels and writings helped to change this teaching and Jewish history.

Paul used his scholarly skills to preach what he called 'the mystery of Christ.' He repeated this many times (Rom 16:25; Eph 1:9; Col 4:3) including: *"In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ"* (Eph 3:4). Paul taught that the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus was, indeed, such a mystery because no one expected the Messiah to do this. The Christ was expected to act like a lion, and not like a lamb. He was supposed to be a priest, not a sacrifice himself. He was thought to come as a King, not as a suffering servant. Paul preached *"Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles"* (1 Cor 1:23).

Paul also taught that baptism into Jesus Christ is essential for salvation (Acts 19:4-5; Rom 6:4-5; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12). He was baptized immediately upon understanding the gospel message and he baptized many others. Paul taught that baptism essentially replaced circumcision as a sign of our covenant relationship with God (Col 2:11-12). Circumcision is no longer required for salvation, but circumcision of the heart is what matters (Rom 2:25-29; 1 Cor 7:19).

Paul's Inspired Hope

Paul had a vivid hope that was perfected by his interaction with Jesus. Our Lord first spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus, as he was literally called out of darkness. Jesus later spoke to Paul in visions and dreams, guiding him to preach about Jesus wherever he went (Acts 18:9-10; 2 Cor 12:2-9). Paul obeyed Jesus' command *"to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light....so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me"* (Acts 26:18).

Although Paul became the leading Apostle and missionary for Jesus, he continued to have a hope, and not a guarantee, of his reward. Paul was saved in the past tense (2 Tim 1:9; Titus 3:5), saved in the present tense (1 Cor 1:18; Acts 2:47), and he hoped to be saved in the future (1 Cor 15:2; 1 Thes 2:16). Even Paul wrote that his personal salvation was conditional on remaining obedient to his faith and master. He wrote: *"Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it... I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus"* (Phil 3:12-14). See also 1 Cor 9:27; 2 Tim 2:10-12; Gal 5:4; Rom 11:22; Heb 3:12-14; Heb 6:4-6.



Near the end of Paul's life, he endured a dangerous trip to Rome as a prisoner. Once there, Paul was a witness for Christ to Caesar's household as predicted by Jesus (Acts 23:11). While in chains, Paul called together a meeting of the leading Jews to explain his situation and share his common Hope of Israel with them. All Jews believed this same hope, which was first given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Later David, Isaiah and many Jewish prophets repeated the same hope of a Kingdom of God based in Israel. This hope included a Messiah, who Paul now proclaimed to be Jesus. It was this hope, which all Jews believed, that Paul emphasized as he appealed to his brethren. It's the same hope that believers continue to profess today.

Paul's last will and testament is given in his second letter to Timothy. Due to intense persecution under Nero, Paul knew that his death would come soon (2 Tim 4:6). That's why he wrote a very personal letter to the young man Timothy as support for his faith and warnings about apostasy. But Paul's greatest gift to his followers came in his final chapter when he said, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing"* (2 Tim 4:7-8). May each of us live to be faithful and confident, just as Paul was concerning his place in the great Hope of Israel.

"Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (Paul in 1 Tim 6:12).

Two friends were walking through the desert. During some point of the journey, they had an argument; and one friend slapped the other one in the face. The one who got slapped was hurt, but without saying anything, wrote in the sand: "Today my best friend slapped me in the face."

They kept on walking, until they found an oasis, where they decided to take a bath. The one who had been slapped got stuck in the mire and started drowning, but the friend saved him. After he recovered from the near drowning, he wrote on a stone: "Today my best friend saved my life."

The friend who had slapped and saved his best friend asked him, "After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand and now, you write on a stone, why?" The friend replied, "When someone hurts us we should write it down in sand where winds of forgiveness can erase it away. But, when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone where no wind can ever erase it."

Learn to write your hurts in the sand and to carve your blessings in stone.

"Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step."

Martin Luther King

"God is not glorified in any transaction upon earth so much as in the conversion of a sinner."
Archibald Alexander

"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people."
Paul in Titus 2:11

The Bible says:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paul's hope is in righteousness by faith. Rom 1:17; Rom 3:22; Rom 4:3• Paul taught that the Gospel is available to Jews and Gentiles. Gal 3:27-28; Rom 3:22; 1 Cor 12:13• Paul's hope of Israel is our hope too. Acts 13:32; Acts 26:6

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."
Matt 6:10

The Kingdom of God

Hope will be fulfilled in God's Kingdom.

There is a place that is so special that grown people become like children. Families sacrifice for months, or years, to save money in order to enjoy their time there. Little children have the time of their lives. Happiness is the simple goal for all involved. People experience things that they can only dream. It's a pretend world where animals take on human forms, and entertain both young and old. Even superstar football players talk of going there at the end of the Super bowl. That is - to Disney's Magic Kingdom, the most visited theme park in the world. This man-made "kingdom" may be a dream world to some people, but mortality limits the amount of enjoyment that anyone

can have there. Ironically, Walt Disney, dreamer extraordinaire, died five years before Disney World was complete. He never saw his dream fulfilled as his life ended in 1966.

The Kingdom of God will be different, and vastly superior, than any kingdom ever known. The Bible describes the Kingdom in the past tense as the Kingdom of Israel, which had a literal King (2 Chron 13:8; Is 43:15). It is also described in the present tense, in a limited manner, as applied to the Christian church. Jesus taught that in a small sense *“the kingdom of God is in your midst”* (Luke 17:21). He told the people of his day that the Kingdom had come near to them. Both of these were mere shadows of the main event yet to come. Jesus spoke about a wonderful, future, worldwide Kingdom when *“the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed”* (Dan 2:44). His future Kingdom on earth is where Jesus chose to focus (Matt 8:11; 13:44-46; 16:19; 19:23-24).

When Jesus began his ministry, he first proclaimed the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 4:17). This shows the first priority that Jesus applied to this vital subject of hope. The four gospel writers mentioned the Kingdom 88 times, which confirms that Jesus continued to talk about it often. *“I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent”* (Luke 4:43). When Jesus sent his disciples out to preach, he commanded that they teach about the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:2). Even after his resurrection, Jesus showed himself for forty days to his disciples with a loud-and-clear message about the Kingdom (Acts 1:3). Jesus also spoke about the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven no less than twelve times in parables.



Kingdom of God or Heaven?

Jesus used the term ‘Kingdom of God’ 57 times and ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ 31 times in the four gospels. Nowhere is the term ‘Kingdom in Heaven’ used in scripture. The Kingdom will be heavenly, and of God, but not located in heaven. Jesus repeatedly talks about the Kingdom on earth (Matt 5:5; 6:10; Mark 11:10). These two terms are used interchangeably as ‘heaven’ is often used in place of God (Matt 21:25; Luke 15:18; John 3:27). Jesus gave an explicit example when he spoke about a rich young ruler. *“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God’”* (Matt 19:23-24). This confirms that Jesus’ message about the Kingdom is perfectly in tune with the promises to Abraham and David. God plans to re-establish the Kingdom of Israel, only this time as a glorified, heavenly Kingdom on earth.

What will Jesus do in his Kingdom?

Jesus will, first of all, raise the dead and judge those whom he chooses (2 Tim 4:1; John 5:28-29; Acts 10:42). The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 is but one example where Jesus described the process of how people will be judged by him. This parable is not meant to be taken literally, but does give disciples something serious to think about. The faithful will be given their reward of eternal life and the unfaithful will receive their penalty of punishment and death (Matt 25:23-30; 25:34-46; 11:24). *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad”* (2 Cor 5:10). After that the Bible gives many clues regarding what will happen, but without a timeline. We know that Jesus will appoint his followers as judges to help rule the land (Matt 19:28-29; 1 Cor 6:2; Dan 7:18-27). Those who are counted as worthy will also act as kings and priests to the remaining mortals in the Kingdom (Ex 19:6; Rev 1:6; 5:10). Eventually every person and every nation will come to recognize Jesus as Messiah and King (Heb 8:8-12; Ezek 39:7). Jesus will judge and teach the nations from Jerusalem. Every nation must worship Jesus as King, or they will suffer plagues and drought (Zech 14:16-18; Is 66:18-21).

The earth will need to be cleansed and this will be a gradual process. From the final battle of Armageddon, it will take seven months just to bury the dead (Ezek 39:12). It will also take seven years to rid the earth of weapons by fire (Ezek 39:9-10). Somehow Jesus will execute judgment by fire on the earth, in order to burn up the sinful works (Is 66:15-16; 2 Pet 3:7-13). The land of

Israel, and the whole earth, will be renewed as the planet will receive a divine face-lift (Rev 21:2, 10).

Eventually a temple will be built in Jerusalem, but unlike any house of God ever seen (Zech 6:12-15). Jesus will be the focal point as God's perfect representative. *"Therefore God exalted him to the*



highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth" (Phil 2:9-10). Jesus will oversee sacrifices in the Kingdom, but not like those in former days. Because Jesus died once for all (Heb 9:24-28), no more animal sacrifices will be needed for forgiveness of sins (Is 11:9; 65:25; Matt 9:13; 1 Sam 15:22; Ps 40:6; 51:17; Jonah 2:9; 1 Pet 2:5; Rom 12:1). *"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased"* (Heb 13:15-16).

What is the Millennium?

Y2K opened people's eyes to the impact of a millennial change. In the years prior to the year 2000, computer experts warned of cataclysmal effects due to a computing flaw that affected all computers. Due to dire threats, millions of individuals and governments worldwide took action to upgrade systems and prepare for unknown changes. Fortunately, negative effects were minimal and there were no significant problems when January 1, 2000 arrived.

The Millennium is a 1,000-year Kingdom concept that originates in the last book of the Bible. It is understood by many Christians to be a literal time period because the Bible states: *"They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years"* (Rev 20:4-6). Combined with Peter's writings (2 Pet 3:8), an implicit case can be made for such a literal Kingdom time period. The challenge is that the book of Revelation is highly symbolic and it's not wise to build an entire and new doctrine on such an uncertain foundation.

On the other hand, there is significant rationale for a millennial time period in the Bible. There are many examples of events in the Kingdom that require a gradual time period to accommodate changes. Jesus told us that the primary reward for faithful believers is eternal life, yet we also read that people will still die in the Kingdom (Is 65:20). He said that believers who are given immortality would become like angels and not co-habit (Matt 22:30), yet we read elsewhere that babies will still be born (Is 65:23). Though joy and peace are promised on earth (Is 35:10; Rev 21:4), there will still be war (Ezek 38; Joel 3:9-11) and disputes to settle (Is 2:4). How do these conflicting statements fit together? Why won't God change everything all at once?

The answer seems to be that the first time period of God's Kingdom will last 1,000 years, or a millennium. It will be a gradual cleansing of the earth and, ultimately, a return of man to God. Mortal people who are alive during the Kingdom age will die and await the second resurrection. Since the fall of Adam, mankind has been separated from God's presence due to our sin (Is 59:2), but God's intention has always been to reward faithful followers with His eternal glory. Jesus will be king in God's Kingdom, leading his followers back to oneness with his Father. *"Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet"* (1 Cor 15:24-25).

The Bible hope is to gain eternal life in God's Kingdom with Jesus as king. It is to return to our Creator and see the face of God (Matt 5:8; Ex 33:18-22). It is to live in a sinless state, in a glorified body (1 Cor 15:42-44). It is to live in the presence of God and be with Him always. *"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"* (1 John 3:2).

“For me Christianity is about the Kingdom, not about the Church: it has to do with human growth and development, not church growth and development.”

Michael Taylor

“The doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the main teaching of Jesus, is certainly one of the most revolutionary doctrines that ever stirred and changed human thought.”

H. G. Wells

*“They tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might,
your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.”*

Ps 145:11-13

The Bible says:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mankind’s great hope is to enter the Kingdom of God. Acts 8:12; Matt 6:10; Luke 6:20• Jesus will be King in the Kingdom on earth. Matt 25:31-34; Rev 11:15; Matt 19:28-29• The Millennium will usher in eternity with God. 1 Cor 15:24-26; Rev 21:2-4; 2 Pet 3:7-13

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.’”

John 11:25

Resurrection

Resurrection is the beginning of eternal life.

The transformation of a caterpillar into a Monarch butterfly is nothing short of a miracle. God created caterpillars to live for just a few weeks as they eat constantly and grow stronger. The caterpillar then envelops itself in a self-made silk cocoon (pupa) and basically hibernates for 10-14 days as it undergoes a dramatic metamorphosis. Eventually a beautiful butterfly emerges, which is naturally immune to its main food - poisonous milkweed leaves. The Monarch varies in its life expectancy, with some butterflies migrating up to 2,000 miles in North America. Most interestingly, recent research has shown that some butterflies actually remember some parts of their life as a caterpillar, as measured by smelling tests! This may be our spiritual key to why God made these creatures and what we can learn from them.



Christians have correctly compared the transformation of a caterpillar into a butterfly as similar to death and resurrection. Like a caterpillar, Disciples of Christ spend their entire lives working and living in preparation for a future life. The present time is temporal, short-term, and entirely focused on a better life. Like a caterpillar in a cocoon, believers become “asleep in Christ” (1 Cor 15:6, 18; 1 Thes 4:13-15; 2 Pet 3:4) at death and unconsciously wait for the resurrection (John 5:21-23; Phil 3:20-21). Their labors are finished

and each awaits the next step in their life cycle. Upon awakening, Monarch butterflies get to work, only this time in a glorified body and with an innate mission. They faintly recall some aspects of their prior existence, but mostly focus on their new life. In a similar way, people who are resurrected and glorified will find themselves in a new world, with a new focus. Those who are counted as worthy will partake in all of the promises and blessings as new creatures (2 Cor 5:17; Rom 6:4). May each of us live to be like a butterfly in the Kingdom of God. But first, we must understand what to expect with our own resurrection.

Bible Examples of Resurrection

During Jesus’ ministry, a group called the Sadducees ruled as priests. These leaders were known for their riches and corruption, as well as for their lack of belief in angels or resurrection. They approached Jesus and challenged him with a hypothetical example intended to disprove the resurrection and Jesus’ teaching. They wanted Jesus to answer a trick question about resurrection and asked what would happen when one woman was married seven times? Which one would she be married to when resurrected? This turned out to be an easy test for Jesus as he said, *“You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven”* (Matt 22:29-30). Jesus knew their hearts and questions about resurrection, and he knows ours as well.

There are no less than ten examples of people who were resurrected in scripture. Elijah and Elisha both raised boys from the dead, and another dead man rose after touching Elisha’s bones (1 Kg 17:19-23; 2 Kg 4:32-35; 2 Kg 13:20-21). Peter raised faithful Tabitha (Acts 9:37-41) and Paul raised the young man, Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12). Of course, Jesus raised the most people from the dead. In mercy, he raised the daughter of Jairus, a desperate synagogue official (Luke 8:41-54). Another time, Jesus raised a young man being carried on the way to his burial (Luke 7:12-15). The most famous example is when Jesus raised his friend, Lazarus, after being in a tomb for four days (John 11). That’s when Jesus affirmed his teaching and authority regarding resurrection by stating, *“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.”*

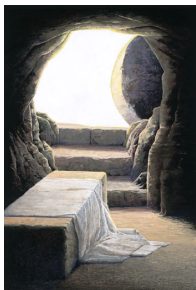
Who will be resurrected?

No one knows, specifically, who will be resurrected and judged by Jesus. But we do have enough Biblical evidence to have a good understanding. Every person since creation will not be resurrected. In the book of Daniel it says, *“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt* (Dan 12:2 KJV). Jesus taught that the resurrection is something to which believers attain, and not something that is guaranteed for all (Luke 20:35; Rev 20:6). Paul wrote the most explicit example of who will be resurrected in his letter to the Romans. He said that those who have been baptized into Jesus Christ symbolically died and rose again from the waters. *“For if we have been united with him in a*

death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom 6:5). Paul confirmed that all dead, faithful, baptized believers would be resurrected and given glorified bodies. This is our hope – to have a spiritual body without the faults and failings of our current flesh. Scripture also teaches us that some will be resurrected, judged and condemned. Defining who these people are, and the prerequisites for their resurrection, is not as important as seeking to become like Jesus eternally.

What is a resurrected body like?

In the first century Christian church, people asked basic questions about resurrection. They didn't know all of the answers. Some mistakenly thought that the resurrection was already past tense and ended (2 Tim 2:18). Some former priests still held to the false belief that there is no resurrection at all (1 Cor 15:12; Acts 23:8; Acts 6:7). Paul spent considerable effort correcting wrong doctrine in what is known as the resurrection chapter (1 Cor 15). He told the Corinthians that a resurrected body is a glorified body. *"It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body"* (1 Cor 15:44). *"For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality"* (1 Cor 15:53).



When Jesus was resurrected, his body was glorified in a supernatural sense. Before he had ascended to his father (John 20:17), Jesus was able to supersede normal laws of time and space. When his disciples were in a closed room, Jesus appeared out of nowhere to be among them (John 20:19). He could disappear in front of people (Luke 24:31). His appearance seemed to change (Luke 24:31; John 21:4, 12). We know that Jesus also visibly ascended to heaven forty days after his resurrection. His body was glorified and made supernatural. No longer was Jesus' body perishable, but it was made immortal. Paul added that Jesus *"will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body"* (Phil 3:21).

Where and when will the resurrection occur?

When Jesus returns to the earth, faithful and unfaithful saints will be gathered together from the four corners of the earth to meet him. *"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord"* (1 Thes 4:16-17 NASV). While the details are still fuzzy – Paul says we see in a mirror dimly (1 Cor 13:12) – we've already established that the reward for all faithful is eternal life on earth. When Jesus died, the gospel of Matthew records that many dead people were resurrected. They walked out of their tombs and appeared to many people in Jerusalem. While these faithful people were not glorified with immortality, their resurrection is an example for the manner in which they were raised. They were resurrected in the location where they were buried. They were recognized by others who had known them before. They were all resurrected at the same time. The timing coincided with Jesus' glorious revival. This is our hope as well, that if we have fallen asleep (died), then we will be resurrected and given immortality by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

May we share the vision and hope that Paul expressed when he said, *"that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection of the dead"* (Phil 3:10-11).

*"Let the resurrection joy lift us from loneliness and weakness and despair
to strength and beauty and happiness."*

Floyd W. Tomkins

"We live and die; Christ died and lived!" John Stott

"Your dead will live; their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust awake and shout for joy."

Is 26:19

The Bible says:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There will be a resurrection from the dead. ! Cor 15; Dan 12:2; Is 26:19• There are requirements to be resurrected. Rom 6:3-5; Luke 20:35; Mark 16:16• Faithful resurrected people will be judged and given immortality. Matt 25:34-40; John 5:21-23; Col 3:4

"He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son."
Rev 21:7

Hope in Revelation

Revelation is full of symbolism and eternal hope.

Secret seals, loud trumpets and locusts that look like horses ready for battle. A woman is clothed with the sun, moon and a crown of twelve stars. There are red, white, green and black horses. Angels and dragons have a battle. The number of the beast is 666. There are seven bowls full of God's wrath. A scarlet beast has seven heads and ten horns. There are flashes of lightning, peals of thunder and earthquakes. 144,000 people are sealed securely. There is smoke, fire, drought, plagues and blood. Hailstorms drop 100lb hail from heaven. The sun is darkened and the moon becomes like blood. A beast comes out of the sea with seven heads and ten horns. An army has 200 million men. They gather at a place called Armageddon.



These are some scary and unusual elements in the final book of the Bible. It is a book called the Apocalypse, or Revelation, and it was given to the apostle John in a vision regarding events yet to take place. Revelation is likely the most disturbing prophetic book in all the books of the Bible. It is presented like a puzzle waiting to be unraveled or, rather, explode. But like the Old Testament prophets, each doom-and-gloom vision is accompanied by a glorious and wonderful visionary hope.

The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ uses many symbols that can be explained by using the Bible. The book itself interprets incense as prayers of saints, lamps as spirits of God, ten horns as ten kings and waters as peoples. One of the main prophecies that encourage hope is the message that Jesus is coming soon (Rev 22:7, 12, 20). What is so hopeful about that? When he returns, believers have the hope of being raised from the dead and life eternal (1 Thes 4:13-18, 1 Cor 15:20-26, 50-57). Jesus will be leading the final battles against all that is wrong with the world (Rev. 19:11-20: 3; Zech 14:1-9, 16). This will be one step in starting a new world order and a new, perfected earth (Rev. 21:1-4, 22-27; 22:1-6: Is 2:2-4). Jesus will become king and lead the healing of the earth - religiously, politically, environmentally, and personally.

Hope for churches

Jesus sent an authoritative message of hope to seven special churches in Asia. He used Revelation to rebuke, direct and encourage these churches, which were dealing with various challenges. These messages were intended for all churches, as all followers of Messiah will encounter similar issues. Those who overcome spiritual obstacles and adversity will also inherit the same amazing rewards below.

Church/City	Verse	Noted For	Reward to him who overcomes:
Ephesus	2:7	Perseverance	Eat of tree of life in Paradise of God
Laodicea	3:21	Lukewarm	Sit with Jesus on his throne
Pergamum	2:17	Faithful	Hidden manna, white stone & new name
Philadelphia	3:12	Good works	Pillar in temple written with name of God
Sardis	3:5	Untainted	Clothed in white, names in book of life
Smyrna	2:10	Tribulation	Crown of life, not hurt by second death
Thyatira	2:26	Deeds & Love	Authority over nations & morning star

Judgment day

One of the main themes in Revelation is the good-vs-evil battle between righteous followers of Jesus and those who persecute the church. This is presented in a variety of ways and, ultimately, leads to the final judgment battle of evil nations, known as Armageddon (Rev 16:16). This same judgment is personalized throughout scripture in what is known as the *"day of judgment"* (2 Pet

2:9; 3:7; 1 John 4:17). Those whom God chooses will be resurrected and “*stand before the judgment seat of Christ*” to receive their reward or punishment (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10). Jesus referred to the “day of judgment” many times, often in parables. The parable of sheep and goats in Matt. 25 is one clear example where some people receive a reward and some condemnation. In that parable, Jesus commends people who treat others with kindness, while he rebukes any who do not treat people the way they would like to be treated. Another parable in Matt. 13:47-50 is about a net that is full of both good and bad fish. When they are being examined, the good ones are used and the bad ones are discarded. The message is clear that at judgment day, Jesus will select those whom he chooses and reject those who are unworthy. Some other examples include:

- The reward of the faithful happens when Jesus returns and not earlier. “*And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory*” (1 Pet 5:4). “*The Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom*” (2 Tim 4:1).
- Those who are ‘dead in Christ’ are described in the Bible as being asleep and awaiting resurrection and judgment (1 Cor 15:20; 1 Thes 4:13; Dan 12:2). No one is able to inherit the promises of God until all receive their reward at the same time (Heb 11:39-40; John 5:25-29). No one dies and goes to heaven, but the reward of faithful Christians will be on earth when Christ returns (John 3:13; Matt 5:5; 6:10; 16:27; Rev 5:10; 22:12).
- All go to the same place at death, which is the grave (Sheol). This is consistent throughout scripture, and fits with how disciples fall asleep in Christ at death. Extensive examples prove this Bible teaching including: 1 Sam 28:19; Ps 104:29; 146:4; Ecc 12:7.
- It is consistent with the character of our loving Heavenly Father that he will not cause those who are condemned at judgment day to be tortured forever. The Bible hope is eternal life, while punishment is eternal death. Those who are found unworthy by Jesus at His judgment will be punished and put to death again (Rev 20:11-12; 2 Thes 1:8-9; Rev 21:8).

No more tears

Revelation 21 is one of the most hopeful and inspiring chapters in the entire Bible. “*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband*” (Rev 21:1-2). This vision echoes Isaiah and reinforces Jesus’ prayer, “*thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*” (Matt 6:10). The reward of the faithful will be eternal life on earth, but it will not be like our violent, polluted and corrupt planet we know today. The entire earth will be cleansed and “*full of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea*” (Hab 2:14).

Behold,
I make all
things new
- Revelation 21:5

Then those who are judged worthy will be given immortality like angels and all our sins will be erased. All of the world’s spiritual darkness will be cleansed by God’s light (1 Pet 2:9). All sorrow and sighing will cease. “*He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away*” (Rev 21:4). This verse repeats for emphasis that what God has promised He will fulfill (Rev 7:17; Is 25:8; 65:19). Imagine a world without pain or sadness. What a wonderful day that will be! What amazing sights and surprises we look forward to in God’s Kingdom! The topography of the land will be changed, and perfected. The city of peace, Jerusalem, will be glorified and the glory of God will illuminate the land.

The final chapter

Revelation 22 is the conclusion to the entire inspired word of God. While Genesis began with the creation of everything we know, Revelation ends with the new creation of everything we don’t know. Genesis introduces mankind to the garden in Eden, and Revelation ends with a return to a glorified Eden. Genesis describes a river that flows out of Eden (Gen 2:10), and Revelation describes a river of the water of life, which flows from the throne of God. Genesis describes the tree of life and Revelation reintroduces a future tree of life (Rev 22:2) with fruit for food and leaves for healing of the nations. “*Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life*” (Rev 22:14).

In the final chapter, Jesus reminds his followers that he is coming back to reign on earth. He repeats this three times in the final chapter to confirm his testimony: *"I am coming quickly"* (Rev 22:7, 12, 20). He is not slow about his promise, but is patient towards all people, while he waits for repentance and obedience (2 Pet 3:9). Jesus promises a great reward to those who follow him until the end. May you be blessed to follow Jesus and to *"keep the words of the prophecy written in this scroll"* (Rev 22:7). May you drink of the water of life. May you eat of the tree of life. May you enter those glorious future gates of New Jerusalem. May you be ready and willing, anxiously waiting for Jesus to return as king of all the earth. May you be blessed to call out to him: *"Amen. Come, Lord Jesus"* (Rev 22:21).

"The Book of Revelation is about the gospel. The gospel is its central theme. Above all it is speaking of the coming kingdom of God through the victory of Christ at Calvary."
Graeme Goldsworthy

*"You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth."* Rev 5:10

The Bible says:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revelation reinforces that Jesus will return to set up his kingdom. Rev 1:7; Rev 21:1-4; Rev 22:20• There will be a day of judgment for those who are resurrected. Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:1• The New Jerusalem will return to be like a glorified garden in Eden. Rev 21:1; Rev 22:2, 14

*"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*
Micah 6:8

What must we do to be saved?

Grace: The reason any person will be saved is entirely due to the grace of God. No one has earned eternal life and everyone only deserves death due to sin. By the grace of God only we have Bible hope to be saved.

- *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God"* (Eph 2:8).
- *"No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are"* (Acts 15:11).
- *"For the wages of sin is death, but the (free) gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom 6:23).
- See also Rom 5:17-21; Eph 2:5; 2 Thes 2:16; Ex 33:19; Ps 51:1; Rom 9:16

Faith: Without the faith of Abraham, no one can please God or be saved. Faith is the foundation for believing and obeying the Word of God. Jesus told one follower: “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

- “For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (Rom 1:17).



- “For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved” (Rom 10:10).
- “But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved” (Heb 10:39).
- “For you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Pet 1:9).
- See also Gal 3:26-29; Ps 132:16; 1 Thes 5:8; 2 Tim 3:15; Heb 11:1-6

God our Father: It is essential that we understand and believe that God is one. He chose the seed of Abraham to be his special people and today chooses those who follow his example of faithfulness. The Creator of the universe has a plan and a purpose for all creation, including you. He seeks your submission, obedience, praise and worship.

- “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (Heb 6:4).
- “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3).
- “I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God” (Is 45:5).
- See also Heb 7:19; 11:6; Is 40:28-31; 42:5; Titus 1:2; Deut 28:1-14

In Jesus: There is no real hope apart from Jesus (Yeshua). He is the Son of God who was sacrificed to take away the sins of the world. Thanks to his offering, all people now have the opportunity to be reconciled to the Father. God raised him from the dead, gave him immortality, granted him all authority on earth and in heaven, and set him as mediator in heaven between God and man.

- “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name (besides Jesus) under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).
- “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved” (Rom 10:9-10).
- “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).
- See also 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 1:1-4; Acts 10:43; Eph 2: 12-13; John 14:6; 10:28

Confession/Repentance: All people sin and fall short of the glory of God. In order to please God and obtain salvation, we must confess and repent from our sins. Jesus said, “I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

- “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret” (2 Cor 7:10).
- “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Tim 6:12).
- “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Baptism: Jesus taught that disciples must be born again of both water and spirit. The word ‘baptism’ means to dip, or immerse. Jesus was baptized as an adult himself and he gave the example that baptism is a necessary symbol of repentance, cleansing, death and resurrection.

- “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16).
- “And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 3:21).



- *“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life”* (Rom 6:4).
- See also: Matt 3:13-17; John 3:3-8; Acts 2:41; 8:36; 10:47-48; 19:4; Gal 3:27-29; Col 2:12

Communion: Fellowship, communion, sharing and breaking of bread are all Biblical terms that describe the symbolic act of eating bread and wine in memory of Jesus. Paul exhorted early disciples to break bread in memory of Jesus’ body and blood until he comes again.

- *“Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.* (John 6:53-55).
- *“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’”(Matt 26:26-28).*
- See also Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7; Jer 16:7; Heb 13:16;

Good Works: Works themselves can save no one. But good works are an important expression of our faith. Jesus himself performed many good works and we should follow his example.

- *“As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead”* (James 2:26).
- *“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me”* (Matt 25:35-36).
- *“As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work”* (John 9:4).

Endurance: The Bible says that believers have been saved, are being saved and still hope to be saved. Salvation is a process that ultimately depends on believers being faithful until the end. No one is “once-saved, always-saved” because we must run the race until the end to win the prize.

- *“But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved”* (Mark 13:13).
- *“We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end”* (Heb 3:14).
- *“Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off”* (Rom 11:22).
- See also: 2 Pet 3:17; 1 Cor 15:1-2; Heb 6:4-6; Phil 3:13; Gal 5:4

The information above is not meant to be a checklist that leads to salvation. Nor is it a comprehensive list for what the Bible says should be done by disciples of Christ. There are brief lists in scripture (1 Cor 15:3-4; Heb 6:1-2; Acts 2:42-47) that emphasize the importance of “first principles” such as the nature of man, source of sin, sacrifice of Christ and Kingdom of God – among others.

It is our hope that this book will enrich all in their studies of the Bible. We believe that the Word of God is divinely inspired and able to “make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15). Our prayer for everyone is that when Jesus returns to the earth to set up his kingdom, we will hear his precious words, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matt 25:21).

Our Creed

We believe in God, the Father Almighty,
the Maker of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and buried;

The third day He arose again from the dead;

He ascended into heaven,
and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty;
from where he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

We believe in the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.

A brief history: Who we are

The Christadelphians are not a new church. Many believers since the time of Jesus have held the same faith as the Christadelphians. There have been countless independent communities around the world who have eagerly studied the Bible and accepted its simple teachings.

The beliefs and practices of the Christadelphians can be traced from the earliest Christians of the 1st and 2nd Centuries in documents such as the Epistle of Clement, the Didache and the original Apostles' Creed. Throughout the ages, a remnant of believers has always maintained the true Bible faith. With the advent of religious freedom in Europe in the 16th Century Reformation, the same beliefs and practices resurfaced in Bible-minded groups such as the Swiss Anabaptists and Polish Socinians. The early English Baptists held similar beliefs (although these beliefs are not held by Baptists today). In the 18th Century, many leading figures in the Enlightenment such as Sir Isaac Newton held these same beliefs.

The modern Christadelphian movement has its origin in the 1830s, an age of revival and reform in both America and England. In America, a medical doctor, John Thomas, published the Herald of the Kingdom, which set out Bible teaching on basic doctrines, Bible prophecy and the Kingdom of God. Thomas made no claims to any vision or personal revelations—only to try to be a diligent student of the Bible and the original teachings of Jesus Christ.

When the American Civil War broke out in 1861, those Christian groups who were conscientious objectors were required to register with the Union government. As a result, Sam Coffman and

other brothers in Ogle County (near Rockford), Illinois, registered themselves as "Christadelphians", which is the Greek word for "Brethren in Christ." This name was soon adopted by many like-minded groups of believers in America and Britain.

The Christadelphians of Chicago were established in 1867 and met in various homes and rented rooms. In 1950, we purchased our first building at 2726 N. Fairfield Ave. in Chicago and later moved to 3735 N. Narragansett in Chicago. As many members were moving to the western suburbs, it was decided to sell the building and buy or build a new church in the suburbs. The church finally moved in 1990 to 16th and Highland in Lombard after a merger with the Elgin and Chicago churches, where we remain as a light stand today.

Additional information about Christadelphians can be found at:

www.thisisyourbible.com

www.one-gospel.org

www.thechristadelphians.org

www.christadelphia.org

www.thebiblehope.org

Back Cover: Church building and people picture??

Quotes from members about The Bible Hope:

"Writing this book together has been a spiritually invigorating exercise. We studied as a group and are thrilled to share our beliefs and findings. May God bless you to read this book and find the road to eternal life in the Kingdom of God."

"This book provides a concise summary of the Bible teachings used by Jesus and the early disciples."

"The Bible Hope is not as obvious as you might think. This book provides conclusive Biblical evidence for Jesus' return to the earth, and eternal life in his kingdom. What an amazing, upbeat and honest hope this is!"

"This was an exciting project! I hope the message can help many who are concerned and troubled."

"I hope this endeavor will encourage others to diligently read their Bibles."

"We are all disciples of Christ and students of the Bible. Our aim is that this book will help you discover the God-given hope in the Bible and live accordingly."

"For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope." Romans 15:4

"Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she (wisdom) is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold." Proverbs 3:13

"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:32

