

**Joke:** A Minister was walking down the street when he came upon a group of about a dozen boys, all of them between 10 and 12 years of age.

The group had surrounded a dog. Concerned lest the boys were hurting the dog, he went over and asked "What are you doing with that dog?"

One of the boys replied, "This dog is just an old neighborhood stray. We all want him, but only one of us can take him home. So we've decided that whichever one of us can tell the biggest lie will get to keep the dog."

Of course, the reverend was taken aback. "You boys shouldn't be having a contest telling lies!" he exclaimed. He then launched into a ten minute sermon against lying, beginning, "Don't you boys know it's a sin to lie," and ending with, "Why, when I was your age, I never told a lie."

There was dead silence for about a minute. Just as the reverend was beginning to think he'd gotten through to

them, the smallest boy gave a deep sigh and said, "All right, give him the dog."

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## The Wonder of Christmas Hope - Week 4

Here we are in our Christmas series looking at The Wonder of Christmas and today we will be looking at the wonder of His hope.

Part of the Wonder of Christmas is how God chose to give needed hope to His people. For years and years before Jesus ever fulfilled the hundreds of prophecies that pointed to His initial arrival that first Christmas, God had hope in His heart for His people.

The arrival of that centuries-old, promised hope happened under a star-filled sky in a manger on the outskirts of Bethlehem and it came at just the right time.

Galatians 4:4–7 (ESV): But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

The Messiah’s advent came to fruition just as it had been promised. Hope incarnate was wrapped in swaddling cloths and lay sleeping in a manger.

Biblical scholars are not united on the exact number of Old Testament prophecies that foretold of the coming Messiah, however, most agree that there were over 300 of them.

Each one was a promise of hope about what God would do one day for His people who needed a Savior to rescue them.

**Show Video - TWOC - Hope ([skitguys.com](http://skitguys.com))**

The prophecy referenced in the video is found in Isaiah 7:14 it tells us,

Isaiah 7:14 (NIV): Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

And some 700 years later, this promised prophecy of hope from the heart of God came true as the virgin Mary gave birth to her firstborn son. They named Him Jesus because He was to save the people from their sins.

That's the reason Jesus was born; He was our Savior who could rescue us from our sins which separated us from our holy God.

Jesus was born to give us hope, hope of enjoying true life while destroying the plans our enemy, the devil, and what he had in mind since the Garden of Eden, that was referenced in the video.

Genesis 3 depicts the initial moment in time when the works of the devil personified in the form of the serpent were let loose on God's creation through the disobedience of Adam and Eve.

From that instant forward, we needed a Savior. From that minute forward, we needed hope.

The Scriptures tell us,

Romans 5:12 (TPT): When Adam sinned, the entire world was affected. Sin entered human experience, and death was the result. And so death followed this sin, casting its shadow over all humanity, because all have sinned.

Now that may not sound like good news, but the truth is that's only half the story and honestly, it puts each of us on a level playing field.

But here is the good news. . .

Romans 5:15–21 (TPT): Now, there is no comparison between Adam's transgression and the gracious gift that we experience. For the magnitude of the gift far outweighs the crime. It's true that many died because of one man's transgression, but how much greater will God's grace and his gracious gift of acceptance overflow to many because of what one Man, Jesus, the Messiah, did for us! 16 And this free-flowing gift imparts to us much more than what was given to us through the one who sinned. For because of one transgression, we are all facing a death sentence with a verdict of "Guilty!" But this gracious gift leaves us free from our many failures and brings us into the perfect righteousness of God—acquitted with the words "Not guilty!" 17 Death once held us in its grip, and by the blunder of one man, death reigned as king over humanity. But now, how much more are we held in the grip of grace and continue reigning as kings in life, enjoying our regal freedom through the gift of perfect righteousness in the one and only Jesus, the Messiah! 18 In other words, just as condemnation came upon all people through one transgression, so through one righteous act of Jesus' sacrifice, the perfect righteousness that makes us right

with God and leads us to a victorious life is now available to all. 19 One man's disobedience opened the door for all humanity to become sinners. So also one man's obedience opened the door for many to be made perfectly right with God and acceptable to him. 20 So then, the law was introduced into God's plan to bring the reality of human sinfulness out of hiding. And yet, wherever sin increased, there was more than enough of God's grace to triumph all the more! 21 And just as sin reigned through death, so also this sin-conquering grace will reign as king through righteousness, imparting eternal life through Jesus, our Lord and Messiah!

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

Years later, Jesus articulated this hope in words that are recorded in John 10:10, look at at. . .

John 10:10 (TPT): 10 A thief has only one thing in mind—he wants to steal, slaughter, and destroy. But I have come to

give you everything in abundance, more than you expect—life in its fullness until you overflow!

Jesus let us know that we have two different agendas on a collision course regarding our lives. One is the thief's agenda: the enemy, the devil, Satan; his agenda is to steal, kill and destroy our lives.

However, Jesus also communicated that His agenda was that He left His place in glory, he left Heaven, and came on a rescue mission. It was a mission of deep and abiding love. Jesus' agenda and mission was, and still is, to give all people the opportunity to have an encounter with Him and experience the abundant life that He told us about.

This abundant life would be such that those who became His followers could taste it, see it, smell it, and enjoy it abundantly forever!

David tells us, “to taste and see that the Lord is good.”



This was the gift that was alluded to in the video that we can receive, open and experience this Christmas and enjoy from this day forward.

Yes, Jesus came to give us abundant life in Him.

However, He also came to do something about our enemy, who continues to try and steal, kill, and destroy our lives.

The disciple John reminds us,

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”

I love it when the Bible is so clear? When you don't have to wonder, “Now, what's it saying? What does that mean?”

That verse is from 1 John chapter 3 verse 8 and it is not difficult to understand. You don't need a theology degree. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil; that's pretty clear and awesome.

The devil, whom Peter describes as “your enemy who prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour,” is the same one Jesus was talking about who is out only to steal, kill, and destroy your life.

So, as we find ourselves in this special time of year known as Christmas, we celebrate because Jesus came to pick a fight with our enemy who was, and still is trying to destroy our lives.

We have hope because the One who could save us from the destruction of our enemy had arrived on the scene to rescue us and give us back our lives. To restore us into right relationship with the Father.

The hundreds of prophecies led to a birth that would result in a battle of destruction. Once again church, the reason the Son of God appeared was to what. . .? Destroy the works of the devil.

Translation: It's as if Jesus said, “If you want to be about destroying things, Satan, I'll show you what it means to

destroy! I will go all the way to the cross and disarm you, defang you, and cancel the payment of sin for all of humanity who puts their faith, hope, and trust in me.

Colossians 2:14–15 (TPT): He canceled out every legal violation we had on our record and the old arrest warrant that stood to indict us. He erased it all—our sins, our stained soul—he deleted it all and they cannot be retrieved! Everything we once were in Adam has been placed onto his cross and nailed permanently there as a public display of cancellation. 15 Then Jesus made a public spectacle of all the powers and principalities of darkness, stripping away from them every weapon and all their spiritual authority and power to accuse us. And by the power of the cross, Jesus led them around as prisoners in a procession of triumph. He was not their prisoner; they were his!

Jesus was like. . .I'll come as an innocent baby. I'll go to the cross as a perfect sacrifice. I'll defeat death and enjoy a glorious resurrection. Then, 40 days later, I will ascend to Heaven and send my Holy Spirit to empower and lead my followers.

My Father promised I would come in time, and make no mistake; I will come again to claim what is My own. The next time I will come riding on a white horse with fire in My eyes, a crown on My head, a robe dipped in blood and the armies of heaven following Me on white horses with a prominent tattoo on My robe and thigh that reads: King of kings and Lord of lords.”

Who’s that’s pretty intense, don’t you think?

If you haven’t thought about Jesus in those terms, I encourage you to read Revelation 19 when you get home. That is another promise that was made about a second coming that Jesus will fulfill in time and at just the right time.

Jesus is coming again not to deal with sin; because He did that the first time He came at Christmas with all the hope of Old Testament prophecies fulfilled.

However, when Jesus comes back a second time, He will do so bringing salvation with Him for all those who are waiting for His return.

It's what we remind ourselves of when we take the Lord's Supper and read from 1 Corinthians 11.

1 Corinthians 11:26 (TPT): Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are retelling the story, proclaiming our Lord's death until he comes.

And we will be doing that Saturday night at 7 as we gather for our Christmas Eve service. I hope you plan on being here.

Broadman's Commentary notes that over 500 hope-filled times in the Scriptures it speaks of the return of Jesus.

Because God fulfilled the over 300 prophecies of hope regarding His initial advent as stated in the Old Testament when Jesus was born, this should give us great hope and

confidence that He will do the same to fulfill the over 500 references of His second advent in the days to come.

However, for now, we continue to wait with hope.

The early Christian Church was carried forward by what has come to be called the blessed hope of the return of Jesus. When disciples met one another on the street, their word of greeting was “Maranatha!” which means, “Our Lord, Come!”

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

Jesus said,

Revelation 22:20 (TPT): The one who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly. . .”

And John responds by writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit from the Island of Patmos, “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

And then closes out the book with these words. . .

Revelation 22:21 (TPT): May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the holy believers. Amen!

Our Savior, Jesus, is not a pacifist wimp without a plan. He is a warrior King who came to destroy the works of the devil and to rescue us from sin, death, Satan, and hell; and He is coming again one day soon. And so, because of that, we have a blessed hope this Christmas season even if stuff's not going our way.

Jesus came to give us life and to give it abundantly. He also came to destroy the works of the devil.

Unfortunately, many times for those who are followers of Jesus, while we may experience some life in Jesus, we

seem to not fully experience that “abundant life” He is offering and pointing to in John 10:10.

We often enjoy the forgiveness of sin, but then we leave a lot of greatness on the plates of our lives. We don’t always taste the other parts of the meal Jesus is offering and that includes freedom from sin and true fulfillment in our lives.

This is part of that “abundant life” Jesus is talking about and offering now that He destroyed the works of the devil. This is part of what we can receive, open, and hope for this Christmas.

In other words, there is more to this life than forgiveness. And I’m thankful for His forgiveness. However, there not only is forgiveness from sin, but also wrapped up in that abundant life package from Jesus, there is freedom from that sin! This freedom from sin can lead to fulfillment in our lives that Jesus came to give us.



2 Corinthians 5:17 (TPT): Now, if anyone is enfolded into Christ, he has become an entirely new creation. All that is related to the old order has vanished. Behold, everything is fresh and new.

Two short passages in Hebrews 2:14-17 and 9:26-28 pair so well with the words we read in John 10:10 and from 1 John 3:8.

These words from Hebrews give more dimension to this abundant life Jesus came to give us and the hope we have now while we wait for His return.

Hebrews is a powerful letter that is meant to encourage Christians that are going through tough seasons in life.

So, if you're just trying to make it through December, Hebrews is for you. If you are going through a tough season of life right now, dealing with difficult circumstances, feeling pressed, pulled, beaten down, and discouraged in some areas of life, then Hebrews is meant for you. It's certainly meant for me.

Let's read and I want to sort of just talk through Hebrews  
2:14-17

Hebrews 2:14 (TPT): Since all his "children" have flesh and blood, so Jesus became human to fully identify with us.

Let me pause here for just a moment. . .

That means Jesus - fully God - chose to step out of His divine glory in heaven for a season that started in the womb of Mary and led to His arrival at Christmas, so that He could become fully human here on earth and not only relate to us, but also become like us in our humanity. Jesus: fully God and fully human - came sharing in our flesh and blood. Notice in the next part of verse 14 that we see the word "annihilate," other translations use the word destroy. Both are powerful.

Hebrews 2:14 (TPT): Since all his "children" have flesh and blood, so Jesus became human to fully identify with us. He did this, so that he could experience death and annihilate

the effects of the intimidating accuser who holds against us the power of death.

And then the writer of Hebrews continues. . .

Hebrews 2:15 - 16 (TPT): By embracing death Jesus sets free those who live their entire lives in bondage to the tormenting dread of death. 16 For it is clear that he didn't do this for the angels, but for all the sons and daughters of Abraham.

Let me pause here for a moment. The NIV translation uses the word "helps" in verse 16 and I think it helps us to understand the imagery. It is a word that means someone rescues another by taking hold of them and lifting them out of a dangerous situation.

And Jesus helped us as He grabbed hold of us and rescued us from spiritual and eternal death by what He did on the cross. He was not only our helper, but also our hope.

He became one of us to save all of us who call on His name.

His name is the only name in Heaven and Earth by which people can be saved. His name is the name that is above all names: Jesus. He came to give us abundant life in His name and to rescue us.

Hebrews 2:17 (TPT): This is why he had to be a Man and take hold of our humanity in every way. He made us his brothers and sisters and became our merciful and faithful King-Priest before God; as the One who removed our sins to make us one with him.

Jesus helped us, rescued us, and saved us. Jesus not only forgave us from our sin, but also, He freed us and positioned us to be truly fulfilled by Him why? So we could enjoy abundant life!

Hebrews 9:26-28 continues this incredible theme of how Jesus appeared and gave us the help and hope of new life

in Him that is full of forgiveness, freedom and fulfillment because of what He did when He arrived.

Hebrews 9:26–28 (TPT): for that would mean he must suffer repeatedly ever since the fall of the world. But now he has appeared at the fulfillment of the ages to abolish sin once and for all by the sacrifice of himself! 27 Every human being is appointed to die once, and then to face God's judgment. 28 But when we die we will be face-to-face with Christ, the One who experienced death once for all to bear the sins of many! And now to those who eagerly await him, he will appear a second time; not to deal with sin, but to bring us the fullness of salvation.

This is such good news because we don't have to keep making sacrifices every time we mess up and sin. And church just so you know, sin is anything we do, say, or think that God does not want us to do, say or think.

And Jesus came from heaven to earth, was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, never sinned, never. He never did,

said, or thought anything that God the Father didn't want Him to do, say or think.

And because of that, Jesus was eligible to be the perfect sacrifice of hope to die in our place and make payment for all our sin in the past, present and future.

He did this "once for all" so that we might be able to enjoy that abundant life Jesus came to offer. He was, is, and always will be our only hope.

In other words: Jesus came not only to forgive us but also to free us and to make our lives full with what He created us to become and enjoy: abundant life found in Him and Him alone!

What Jesus did when He laid down His life on the cross was pay a sin debt that gave us back our lives. He bought our forgiveness with His broken body and His poured-out blood, not so that we can jump right back into the pool of sinful choices. No, no, no.

Instead, so that we can choose freedom, choose life in Christ, and experience that abundant life that Jesus offers us. It is a life of fulfillment that Jesus not only created us to have as a gift but also wants us to open, experience, and enjoy.

We don't have to live life on a sin and forgiveness loop.

For many of us, it seems like we sin and then jump into the sin pool; we ask and receive forgiveness from God. And then, instead of living in freedom and fulfillment, we jump right back into that sin pool before we even can turn around in our forgiven status of life.

However church, let this Christmas remind us that Jesus came not only to forgive you from your sin and pull you out of the sin pool but also, He came to give you a freedom that leads to fulfillment.

That's a deep love from the Heart of God intended for you.

This is a gift of hope that leads to and through eternity that can be experienced on earth as it is in heaven. It can begin right now from this day forward being forgiven, living in freedom, and experiencing fulfillment.

That's the abundant life Jesus was talking about that was worth Him coming to destroy the works of the devil. He arrived and did what He did so we could experience abundant life with Him both now and throughout eternity!

And it's the truths we see in those passages from Hebrews, not only of forgiveness in Jesus but also freedom and fullness in Him. These gifts are ours to open this Christmas as we wait with hope for His return.

That is the great word we see in Hebrews 9:28,

Hebrews 9:28 (TPT): And now to those who eagerly await him, he will appear a second time; not to deal with sin, but to bring us the fullness of salvation.



A question we need to ask and answer this Christmas is:  
“What are we supposed to do while we are eagerly waiting  
for Him to arrive again?”

That’s the same question a young, eager, and growing  
Christian had for his spiritual mentor years ago. A high  
school student was having lunch with his spiritual mentor  
and some friends. The student asked what he could do to  
be more intentional in developing his relationship with  
Jesus and become the person Jesus wanted him to be for  
whenever that day of His return might be.

The mentor took one of the napkins on the table and wrote  
these three things on it:

1. Enjoy quiet moments alone with God each day.
2. Develop a continual awareness of His presence.
3. Have yielding obedience to His Spirit.

Living those three things while waiting for Jesus to return  
will help lead a person to experience the abundant life  
Jesus offers since He destroyed the devil's works at the  
cross.

Those three things will help you not only remember that you are forgiven from sin but also invite you to experience your freedom from sin and the fullness that is yours in Christ as you wait for His return with great hope!

Let me share one more with you. . .

Share with others the Good news, tell them all He's done, invite them to hear.

**Show - Church invite video**