

Advent: The Coming of Hope

November 28, 2021

PREPARATION

▶ STUDY

Spend the week studying Isaiah 8:21-9:2 and Matthew 4:15-17. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

▶ PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members and their openness to God's Word.

▶ LANDING POINT

God gives me every reason to hope in all seasons.

GROUP DISCUSSION

- ▶ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.
- ▶ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.
- ▶ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.
- ▶ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

HOPE IN ALL SEASONS

During the Christmas season, believers around the world observe Advent. The word comes from the Latin term *adventus*, which means coming. Advent allows us to re-orient ourselves around the person and work of Christ through rituals like reading scriptures and lighting the wreath candle. These rituals help us look back to celebrate Christ's first coming and look ahead with hope for His second coming. These rituals also help us evaluate our lives and whether we are living with the hope that Jesus came to give us 2,000 years ago.

This week your group will discuss the fact that hope is essential in life and what it means to let the light of hope shine in you. Every person needs hope and the hope Jesus gives us is for all seasons, especially when we face dark and difficult times in life.

Q: *What makes hope essential for us? Why do we need it?*

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LIGHT BREAKING INTO DARKNESS

Centuries before Christ's arrival, the prophet Isaiah came to his fellow Israelites with a message from God. Instead of trusting God and seeking His instruction and revelation, they turned to false idols and pagan practices. Instead of walking in the light with God, they chose to walk in darkness. What were the consequences of walking in darkness? Pain, distress, hunger, and strife.

Even though the Israelites were unfaithful, that did not turn God away. Far from it. He would remain faithful to His people and His promise, and He declared through Isaiah a message of hope. He said that a light is coming for those who for so long have walked in darkness. Let's look at a few of the passages and how they reveal Jesus as the light God promised to bring into the world

Q: *Have volunteers read Isaiah 8:21-9:2 and Matthew 4:15-17. God wants us to walk in the light, not in the darkness. What does it look like when you walk in the light?*

Q: *Jesus called people to repent because the kingdom of heaven was inaugurated at His first coming. How does repentance help us walk in the light?*

Q: *Contextualize Isaiah's prophecy for your own situation. Think of a dark area in your life and declare how the light of Jesus has broken into it to give you hope.*

REFLECTION AND NEXT STEPS

EVERY REASON TO HOPE

Our God is a God of hope. His desire is to give you a hope and a future (Jeremiah 29:11). This hope isn't the kind of hope people have when they say something like, "I hope it doesn't rain today." That's not a certain hope. You can hope all you want but it may very well rain. The kind of hope God gives us is different. This is a hope that is certain. How so? Because God is trustworthy and true to His promises. He promised to send His Son as a Light into the world and He did just that at Christ's first coming. And Jesus promised to return one day, so we have every reason to hope in God and His promises.

God wants to give you hope this Advent season. You may be facing a difficult situation or a tough decision. Maybe you're waiting for light to break into the darkness of disappointment, grief, frustration, anger. Whatever you're facing, God gives you every reason to hope in Him.

Take some time to dwell on the real hope God wants to give you this year:

- *God's hope doesn't disappoint.* God never breaks His promises and He is always true to His word. Eventually people will let us down, even those closest to us. Not so with God. He will always be faithful and will never disappoint.
- *Having hope is having a confident expectation of the future.* If you have hope in the future, you've got power in your present. Thankfully for us as believers, we already know what happens in the future. Jesus wins. The victory is His.

Q: *What are things besides God that people put their hope in?*

Q: Give one example of how God has shown Himself to be faithful to you and to His promises.

Q: What's one thing you can do this week to remember the hope that God gives you?

Q: How can the group be praying for you this week?

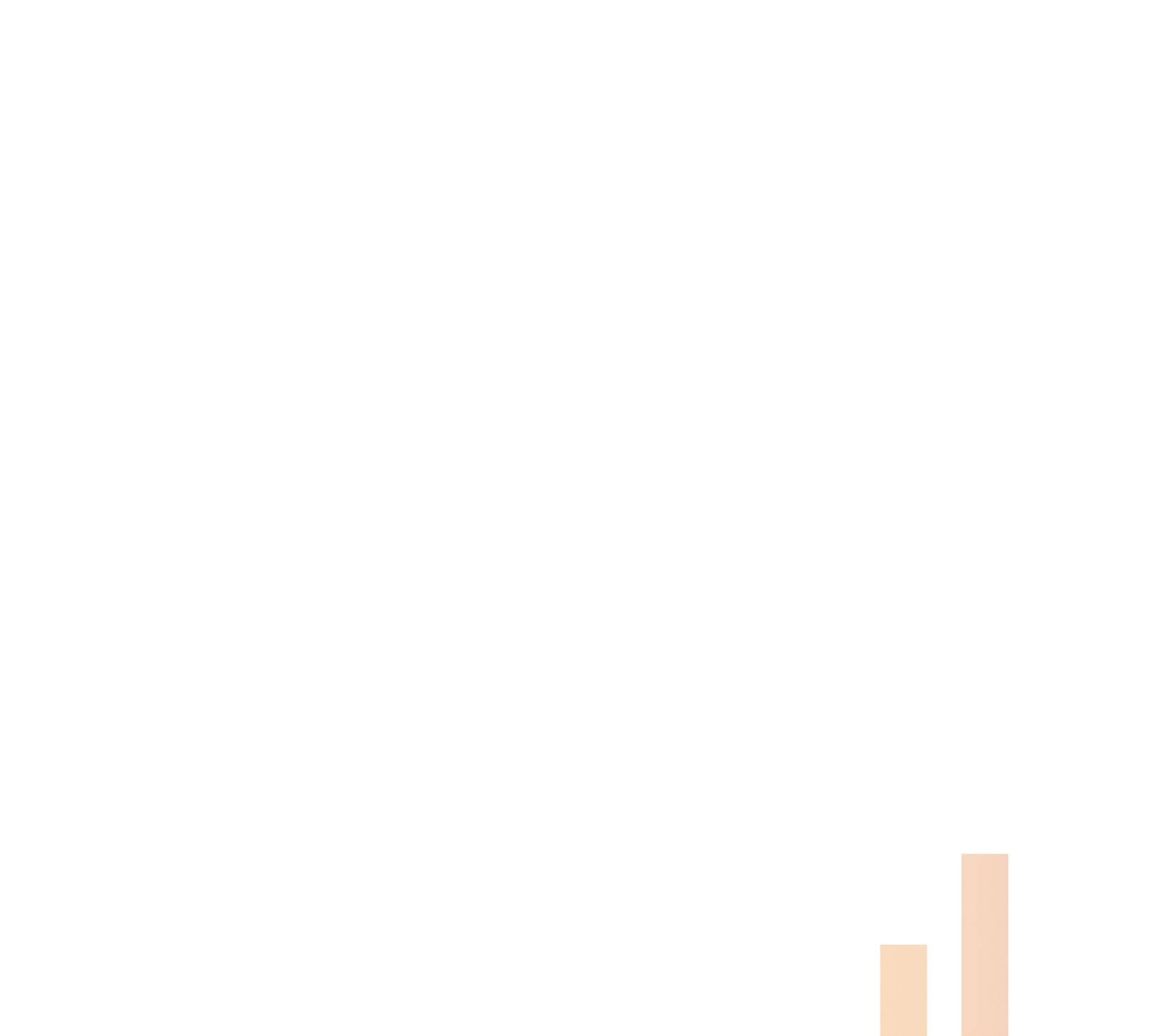
COMMENTARY

Places Mentioned by Isaiah Zebulun, Naphtali and Galilee are mentioned in Isa. 9:1. "The region in the far north of Israel's territory, where the Assyrian [attacks] started. The people there will see the 'great light' (v. 2). This is the place where much of the ministry of Jesus, Immanuel, the light of the world, took place (Matt 4:12–17)."

Advent Wreath Explained "The Advent Wreath is an ordinary wreath with special candles added to it. Three purple candles and one pink candle stand around the outside of the wreath, and a white candle fills the center. Each Sunday during the Advent season, one candle—each representing something different—is lit. Like the Jesse Tree progressively being filled in, the Advent wreath gets brighter and brighter as Christmas approaches.

The first purple candle, lit on the first Sunday of Advent, is called the prophecy candle. In conjunction with the Scripture readings for the week, it represents hope and expectation for the coming Messiah. As the candle burns throughout the week and becomes smaller and smaller, it helps us remember that time continually passes and the return of Christ becomes nearer and nearer with each passing day."

Light and Grace "If the messianic light dawns on the darkest places, then Messiah's salvation can only be a bestowal of grace—namely, that Jesus came to call not the righteous but sinners (9:13)." "[The light that breaks in is not] subjective wishful thinking but an objective, surprising joy breaking upon sinners through the grace of Christ (cf. Isa. 42:6; 49:6; John 1:5; 2 Cor. 4:6).



ENDNOTES

1. D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 1184.
2. Justin Holcomb, "The First Sunday of Advent: Waiting for Christ's Return," *Christianity.com*, November 18, 2021, <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/holidays/advent-i-waiting-for-christ-s-return.html>.
3. D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew–Mark (Revised Edition)*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 145.
4. Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1257.