

SEASON OF
ADVENT
STUDY GUIDE

Week 2: “Hope in God”

1. READ

Pastor Watley’s Scriptures: Psalm 43 : 5 New King James Version (NKJV)

⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God;
For I shall yet praise Him,
The help of my countenance and my God.

Isaiah 43:1-3 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹ But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob,
And He who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called *you* by your name;
You *are* Mine.
² When you pass through the waters, I *will be* with you;
And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.
When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned,
Nor shall the flame scorch you.
³ For I *am* the Lord your God,
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;
I gave Egypt for your ransom,
Ethiopia and Seba in your place.

Revelation 11:15 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven,
saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His
Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”

Further Reading: Psalm 121 New King James Version (NKJV)

¹ I will lift up my eyes to the hills—
From whence comes my help?
² My help *comes* from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.

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³ He will not allow your foot to be moved;
He who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴ Behold, He who keeps Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The Lord *is* your keeper;
The Lord *is* your shade at your right hand.

⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,
Nor the moon by night.

⁷ The Lord shall preserve you from all evil;
He shall preserve your soul.

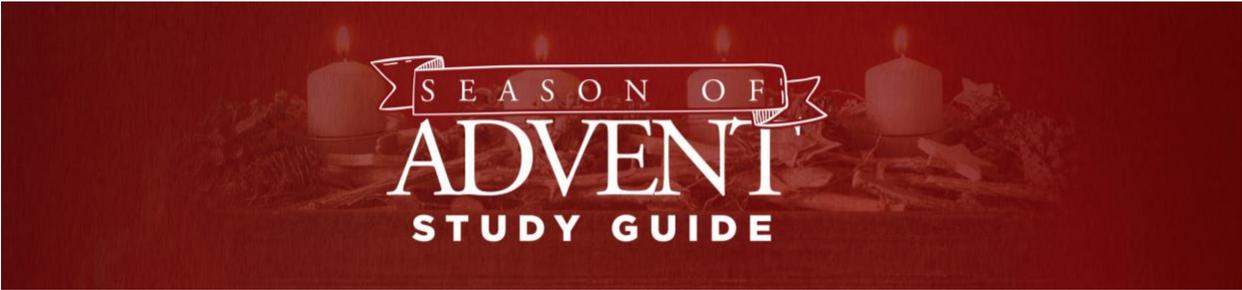
⁸ The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in
From this time forth, and even forevermore.

2. REFLECT

[Click the image to go to our YouTube page for more content!]



For the four weeks leading up to Christmas, many people around the world celebrate the season of **Advent**. As we enter week two of the Advent season, we continue to prepare our hearts and minds for the birth of Jesus, and eagerly await His second coming. During this time, we are



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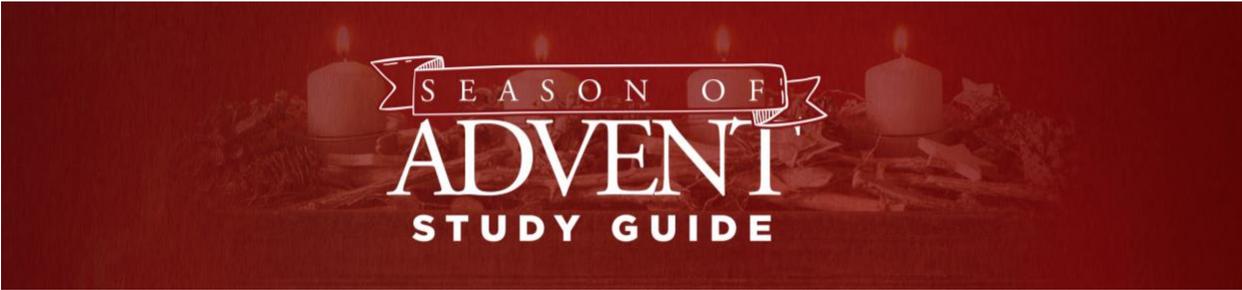
reminded that the promises of Jesus are alive and active! Each year, we are encouraged to celebrate the savior's birth while anticipating a season of spiritual rebirth within each of us. This week, our Senior Pastor Rev. Matthew L. Watley continued his sermon series that is focused on the Advent season. So far, we have been exploring some of the biblical themes that marked the arrival of Jesus and accompanied his presence on Earth. For the weeks leading up to Christmas, we will specifically reflect on the following four major themes: **Peace, Hope, Joy, and Love**. Last week we took an in-depth look at the word Peace.

The theme we are meditating on for this week is *Hope!*

In our lesson for week two entitled "Hope in God," Pastor Watley encourages us to understand what it means to have *biblical* hope. This is important because there is a stark contrast between the world's concept of hope, and the hope that Jesus brings. Instead of the Hallmark version that is full of wishful thinking and subconscious skepticism, the coming Messiah represents a version of hope that is based on trust and confidence that God will work it out. As Pastor Watley mentions, "Hope is not optimism that things will get better. Hope is expectantly waiting for the one who will make them better!" Our hope then becomes an active belief in God, instead of passive inaction as we hope for things to change.

We see this principle at work in our scripture for this week (Psalm 43:5). Verse 5 states, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God." In this passage, we find the psalmist moving from passive inaction to active hope. At first, the writer is "**cast down**." This phrase in the Hebrew literally means to be lying or crouching down. However, the writer then encourages himself to do something active – *Hope in God!* The psalmist knows that by placing his hope in God, he is now declaring that change is on the way. And in the meantime, the psalmist doesn't go back to laying down. The connected phrase says, "For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God." This means that an element of this active biblical hope is praise. Even when we are in difficult circumstances, we can praise God for what He's already done, and what we *know* He is about to do.

This is important to remember when we are presented with the world's perception of hope. As Pastor Watley reminds us, "The **world** speaks of a disembodied hope." This is an abstract hope that offers phrases like "hope for the best," without being grounded in an expectation of a favorable outcome. However the **word** is rooted and grounded in the promises of God. For example, the coming of Jesus was a promise that Israel was hoping for. For generations, believers prayed and praised God for the savior they *knew* would soon arrive. When Jesus is finally born on Earth, God gives us tangible evidence that we can place our Hope in Him! **For additional content on hope, enjoy the Bible Project's video on hope [HERE](#).**



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3. RESPOND

Introspective Questions

- In times of trouble, how can you move from passive inaction to active hope?
- What scriptures, songs, or sayings remind you of hope when you are in a difficult situation?

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think the Psalmist immediately decided that hope would be the solution to his problem?
- When you are in difficult situations, do you immediately go to God for the solution, or do you try to come up with solutions on your own?