



# HOPE

## ADVENT | Week 1

Hope is a word we hear often during Christmas or the Advent season. It is important to make sure that our understanding of this powerful word is correct because the New Testament idea of hope is very different from the way the world thinks about hope.

We might hear someone say, “Will the Cowboys win the championship this year?” And someone will respond, “I don’t know, I hope so!” Someone might stop and ask, “Do you think it will snow on Christmas Day?” And often the reply will be, “I’m not sure, but I hope so.” Hope is commonly thought of as a desire for some future event or circumstance that we cannot be certain will come to pass. But that is not the way the New Testament speaks about hope.

**Titus 1:2** “...in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.”

**Hebrews 3:6** “...but Christ is faithful over God’s house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.”

**Hebrews 6:11** “...And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end...”

We have a fully assured hope because it based on a God who never lies. We have a fully assured hope because it is based on the faithfulness of God’s Son, not ours. We have a fully assured hope because of the countless saints that have gone before us.

## Unconquerable

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“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

### John 1:1-5 (ESV)

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This summer, a team from Bethel went to Spain for a mission trip and visited the town of Gerona. Gerona has quite a history. In the early 19th century, Napoleon set out to conquer all of Europe, and he largely succeeded. One of the few exceptions was Gerona. The French army tried to defeat the city on no less than three occasions, but Gerona remained unconquerable. Our passage today talks about a light that is unconquerable. Though there is a darkness that may appear to be as powerful as the armies of Napoleon, it will never overcome the light of Jesus Christ.

John knew his fair share of darkness. As the last living apostle, he experienced the martyrdom of many friends. The Church endured vicious persecution under the emperor Domitian, and it was during this time that John was exiled to a barren island called Patmos.

Yet, John begins his Gospel not with doom and gloom, but with hope and certainty. He says in verse 5 there is one thing this darkness cannot overcome—light. The light of Jesus is unconquerable.

John had plenty of reason for his hope. Persecution had only grown the Church, not destroyed it. He lived to see Paul, Timothy, Titus, Barnabas, Silas, Luke, and so many others zealously spread the gospel. But, the foundation of John's hope wasn't any particular event or circumstance. His hope was in Jesus. Jesus is more than a man; He is God. And as God, He is eternal, creator, and the giver of life. Only God is unconquerable.

John starts his Gospel at the very beginning; his first words echo Genesis 1:1. John is saying that before our beginning, Jesus already existed in eternity past. To illustrate his meaning, John calls Jesus "the Word" or "Logos"—a Greek word that is packed with meaning. "Logos" describes established moral and scientific order and the force that gives life to all living things. John says this eternally existing, life-giving truth is a person—Jesus.

John says Jesus was God and was with God. John is communicating a unity of place and purpose with God the Father. There is complete shared intimacy and essence. All that is true of God the Father is true of Jesus the Son. They are one in the same.

**"All that is true of God  
the Father is true of  
Jesus the Son."**

As God, Jesus is also Creator. Verse 3 says that everything was made through Jesus without exception. He is the very same Creator of Genesis 1:1. Many in John's day believed Jesus was a sort of demi-god, created by God before everything else. But this belief far underestimates who Jesus is. Jesus is not a creation; He is the Creator.

Finally, Jesus is God because He gives life. The word John uses is *zoe*. It meant more than just breath and a heartbeat. It meant vitality, movement, and energy. Jewish thought understood it as a divine gift to be cherished.

Have you ever been to a place so beautiful it took your breath away? Or experienced such joy and peace that you said something like, "This is the life!" John is saying Jesus is, "the Life." In the same way God breathed life into Adam in the garden, Jesus gives "the Life" to us.

Notice John doesn't say that life was from Jesus, as if life and Jesus could be separated. Life is in Him. John says the life we get from Jesus is the kind of light that is unconquerable by any amount of darkness. The light is unconquerable because it comes from the eternal, creating, life-giving God. That very same God put on flesh and walked among us. His name is Jesus.

## Further Reflection | Individual Study Questions

1. What specifically do you think John means by darkness? To help, read

John 1:9, 3:19. Where do you see traces of this darkness in the world around you? In yourself?

2. In what ways do we underestimate who Jesus is? What consequences might that have in how we follow Him? In our obedience, worship, devotion?
3. What are some ways you find yourself placing your trust in the things Jesus does instead of who He is in His nature?

### Further Reflection | Family Study Questions

1. Have you heard people say that our world was not created by God? What are some ways people may live differently if they believed there was a God who created them versus those who don't?
2. Have you ever had a nightlight in your room? Why did you like having that light at night? What does that tell you about why John used light as a picture to describe Jesus?
3. Do you feel like you've ever experienced knowing Jesus as a person instead of simply seeing the things He does? Think about the same question in regard to your parents or a friend. How is knowing them different than knowing only some things they do?

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