

Christmas Trees & Lights

Let's say you want to describe the feeling of anticipating a future that's better than the present.

You might be giddy or excited or maybe unsure, but most of us know that experience. We call it hope.

It's a state of expectation, and it's crucial for the overcoming Christian, and it's a really important concept in the Bible.

There are many words for hope in the ancient languages of the Bible, and they're all fascinating.

In the Old Testament, there are two main Hebrew words translated as hope.

The first is **yakhal**, which means simply "to wait for."

Like in the story of Noah and the ark, as the flood waters recede, Noah had to **yakhal** for weeks.

Gen 8:10 (NASB) So he waited another seven days longer; and again he sent out the dove from the ark.

The other Hebrew word is **qavah**, which also means to wait. It's related to the Hebrew word qav, which means cord. When you pull a qav tight, you produce a state of tension until there's release.

As if you tied a rope to a treasure and pulled it to you. The tension on the rope is the evidence of your expectation.

You don't have the treasure but its coming!

That's **qavah**, the feeling of tension and expectation while you wait for something to happen.

Psa 37:9 (NASB) For evildoers will be eliminated, But those who wait for the LORD, they will inherit the land.

Isa 40:27-31 (NASB) Why do you say, Jacob, and you assert, Israel, "My way is hidden from the LORD, And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God"? [28] Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is unsearchable. [29] He gives strength to the weary, And to the one who lacks might He increases power. [30] Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, [31] 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.

Job 7:2 (NASB) "As a slave pants for the shade, And as a hired worker who eagerly waits for his wages,

Hope in the Old Testament

So in the language of the Bible, hope is about waiting and expectation, but waiting for what?

In the period of Israel's prophets, as the nation was sinking into self- destruction, Isaiah said, "At this moment, the Lord's hiding his face from Israel, so I will qavah for him." The only hope Isaiah had in those dark days was the hope for God himself.

Isa 8:17 (NASB) And I will wait for the LORD who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; I will wait eagerly for Him.

Isa 8:17 (NLT) I will wait for the LORD, who has turned away from the descendants of Jacob. **I will put my hope in him.**

You find this same notion of hope all over the book of Psalms where these words appear over forty times.

In almost every case, what people are waiting for is God.

Like in Psalm 130, the poet cries out from a pit of despair, Psa 130:5-7 (NASB) I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And I wait for His word. [6] My soul waits in hope for the Lord More than the watchmen for the morning; Yes, more than the watchmen for the morning. [7] Israel, wait for the LORD; For with the LORD there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption.

I **qavah** for the Lord ... Let Israel **yakhal** for the Lord, because he's loyal and will redeem Israel from its sins.

Biblical Hope

Biblical hope is based on a person, which makes it different from optimism.

Optimism is about choosing to see, in any situation, how circumstances could work out for the best.

But biblical hope isn't focused on circumstances. In fact, hopeful people in the Bible often recognize there's no evidence things will get better, but you choose hope anyway.

Pro 23:18 (NAS) Certainly there is a future, And your hope will not be cut off.

Like the prophet Hosea, he lived in a dark time when Israel was being oppressed by foreign empires. And he chose hope when he said God could turn this "valley of trouble into a door of hope," like the day when Israel came up from the land of Egypt.

Hos 2:15 (AMPC) There I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor [troubling] to be for her a door of hope and expectation. And she shall sing there and respond as in the days of her youth and as at the time when she came up out of the land of Egypt. [Exo 15:2; Jos 7:24-26]

God had surprised his people with redemption back in the days of the Exodus, and HE could do so again.

So it's God's past faithfulness that motivates hope for the future.

You look forward by looking backward, trusting in nothing other than God's character.

It's like the poet of Psalm 39 who says, "And now O Lord, what else can I qavah for? You are my yakhal."

Psa 39:7 (AMPC) And now, Lord, what do I wait for and expect? My hope and expectation are in You.

The entire culture of the Jewish people was based on hope.

When they lost hope life became unbearable.

Pro 13:12 (NAS95) Hope deferred makes the heart sick, But desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

Then there is the famous story in Ezekiel about the valley of dry bones.

Eze 37:11 (NASB) Then He said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the entire house of Israel; behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.’

With the prophetic word God would infuse Hope back into His people.

Jesus as Living Hope

In the New Testament, the earliest followers of Jesus cultivated this similar habit of hope.

They believed that Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection was God’s surprising response to our slavery to evil and death.

The empty tomb opened up a new door of hope, and they used the Greek word elpis to describe this anticipation.

The apostle Peter said that Jesus’ resurrection opened up a “living hope” that people can be reborn to become new and different kinds of humans.

1Pe 1:3 (TPT) Celebrate with praises the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has shown us his extravagant mercy. For his fountain of mercy has given us a new life—we are reborn to experience a living, energetic hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Col 1:27 (TPT) Living within you is the Christ who floods you with the expectation of glory! This mystery of Christ, embedded within us, becomes a heavenly treasure chest of hope filled with the riches of glory for his people, and God wants everyone to know it!

More than once, the apostle Paul says the good news about Jesus announces “the elpis of glory.”

Col 1:27 (NASB) to whom God willed to make known what the wealth of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles is, the mystery that is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

In both cases, this elpis is based on a person, the risen Jesus, who has overcome death.

So Christian hope is bold, waiting for humanity and the whole universe to be rescued from evil and death.

Our expectation is that both corporately and individually

every word of God will be manifested.

- Every dream realized
- Every vision fulfilled
- Every disease healed
- Every captive set free
- Every sinner saved

We don’t hope for little things we hope for Kingdom sized things.

Heb 11:1 (NASB) Now faith is the certainty of things hoped for, a proof of things not seen.

And some would say it’s crazy, and maybe it is.

I’ve had people says things like....

.....odds are it won’t ever happen

.... the odds are against you
.....what are the odds?

But biblical hope isn't optimism based on the odds.

Before you were born, And were still too tiny for The human eye to see,
You won the race for life against 250 million competitors. (What are the odds of that?)
And yet, How fast you have forgotten His Grace, When your very existence Is proof of His greatness.
You were born a winner, A warrior, One who defied the odds
By surviving the most gruesome Battle of them all.
And now that you are a giant, Why do you even doubt victory
Against smaller numbers, And wider margins?
The only walls that exist, Are those you have placed in your mind.
And whatever obstacles you conceive, Exist only because you have forgotten What you have already
achieved and what He has already done.

Hold onto your Hope!

It's a choice to wait for God to bring about a future that's as surprising as a crucified man rising from the dead.

Christian hope looks back to the risen Jesus in order to look forward, and so we wait.

And that's what the biblical words for hope are all about.

Waiting in Expectation for the Greatness of My God to manifest in my life.

Hope is what I got for Christmas so whatdidcha get?