

**Hope is a Dangerous Thing**

“...the bravest thing I have is hope” Brave Saint Saturn - [The Light of Things Hoped For](#)

In the 1994 film *The Shawshank Redemption*, two good friends, who both face life sentences; discuss a revelation that could prove one of them innocent. Red, the older, more cynical prisoner strongly reproves Andy Dufrane, his resourceful and wrongly accused friend. “Hope is a dangerous thing. Drive a man insane. It’s got no place in here. Better get used to that idea.” But Andy doesn’t get used to the idea and the story ends with Red’s simple admission, “I hope.”

Hope, rightly understood, is truly one of the most courageous efforts of our lives. It was certainly a courageous effort for the people of Israel who waited for the advent (coming) of Messiah. As we celebrate Christmas this year, let’s consider the messianic expectation of the First Testament people of God as spoken by the Prophet Isaiah.

Reader’s Note: There are many ways to study the Bible. This week in the Scrolls, we will take a different approach from our normal way of searching the Scriptures. Sometimes it is helpful to take to just read extended portions of God’s Word, as opposed to isolating on a few verses. That is our approach this week. Each day we will tackle three chapters of Isaiah (chapters 40-55). The questions are secondary to simply reading the text. If you are struck by a passage, go back and read it again slowly and out loud. These are among the most refreshing and hopeful texts in the Bible. I have turned to them often, in both dark times and happy. Enjoy them.

**Monday – Comfort, Comfort**

*“And you for whom Justice has a special meaning should also rejoice- it is the birthday of Justice himself!  
And you who suffer from chronic fatigue and disease should rejoice-it is the birthday of the Divine Physician!  
And you captives and hostages should rejoice-this is the birthday of the One who’ll ransom you from captivity!”*

St Augustine of Hippo – Christmas Sermons to the People

1. Merry Christmas! Please Read Isaiah 40-42.
2. As we celebrate Christmas this day, how does Isaiah 40:3-5 (especially verse 5) help us to understand the nature of our celebration? What other verses reprise this theme? (See 41:16; 42:12; 42:21; 43:7; 44:13; 44:23)
3. Look back at 40:28-31. What do these verses say about hope?

**Tuesday**

*“A word came forth in Galilee, a word like to a star;  
It climbed and rang and blessed and burnt wherever brave hearts are  
A word of sudden secret hope, of trial and increase  
Of wrath and pity fused in fire, and passion kissing peace.”*

G.K Chesterton - The Spirit of Christmas

1. Please Read Isaiah 43-45. How do you feel about God’s statement in 43:1, “you are mine”? (see related text in 1 Cor. 6:19-20)
2. What do we learn about God’s plan in these chapters (See 44:21-25 and 45:15-17)?

**Wednesday**

*“God the Son, without ceasing to be immense and infinite in His divinity, makes His own our infant likeness.  
When he journeys into human nature, He takes the little way.”* John Saward - Cradle of Redeeming Love

1. Please Read Isaiah 46-48. What word is repeated in these chapters?
2. Look at 46:3-4. Though the primary audience of these verses is the people of Israel, in a sense we as the people of God in Christ are the secondary audience. What do these truths mean to you? Is there someone who especially needs God’s sustaining work at this time? Take some time to pray for them.

**Thursday**

1. Please Read Isaiah 49-51. What is promised in 49:6? How did Jesus accomplish this?
2. In 51:4-8 what does God describe as his? What instructions does he give in these verses?

**Friday – A Christmas Song**

*“The atoning significance of the sufferings of the Servant (in Isaiah 53) are peculiar to Jesus, the unique servant.”*  
Geoffrey Grogan - Expositor’s Commentary, Isaiah

1. Please Read Isaiah 53-55. Isaiah 53 is the most famous Servant Song. In your Bible, underline each passage in the chapter that reminds you of Jesus?
2. What invitation and promise does God make in Isaiah 55?