



*Advent 1:
The Candle of
Hope*

In looking at the four candles representing Advent, we want to ensure our focus is on the spiritual lessons to be learned.

“Hope” is commonly used to mean a wish: its strength is the strength of the person's desire. **But in the Bible hope is the confident expectation of what God has promised and its strength is in His faithfulness.**

Read Matthew 1:18-23

This passage gives us the key to our hope.

22 All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet:

23 “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

Many people don’t want the Bible to be true because if it were, they would have to make drastic changes to their lives. Many people will tell you that the Bible contradicts itself. However, when it comes to the birth, life and death of Jesus, there are at least 351 prophecies in the Old Testament which have their fulfilment in the New Testament. Mathematicians say that the odds of this happening far exceed our ability to quantify it. For those who understand their maths: 1 person fulfilling 8 prophecies: 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000 1 person fulfilling 48 prophecies: 1 chance in 10 to the 157th power 1 person fulfilling 300+ prophecies: Only Jesus!

Here are seven Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the New Testament:

‘MESSIANIC PROPHECIES’

Old Testament	New Testament
Isaiah 11:1-5	Matthew 1:1-6
Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1
Isaiah 53:3	John 1:11
Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 26:15
Psalms 34:20	John 19:33-36
Psalms 22:18	Matthew 27:35
Psalms 16:10	Acts 2:30-32

Read through these scriptures so that we have a confident expectation of what God has promised in his word.

- Were you aware of the number of prophecies concerning Jesus?
- Does this encourage your faith (hope) in God's word?

1 Peter 3:15 says: ***“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that is in you.”***

- If Jesus is the light of your life, you need to be able to explain to people why this is so and what difference he has made in the way you live.

The words of the song by Karl Jobe sum up what this candle of hope represents:

*There's nothing worth more that could ever come close
No thing can compare, you're our living hope
Your presence, Lord*

In the Bible, hope and light are constantly linked together:

Isaiah 9:12 one of the many prophecies concerning the birth of Jesus says:

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.”

John 8:12 ***“Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”***

John 12:46 ***“I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness.”***

John 12:35 ***“For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going”.***

- Is Jesus the light of your life? If so, what does this mean to you?
- What do you think John 12:35 means?
- Read 2 Corinthians 4:6. What is God saying through these words of Paul?
- According to John 1:8, who came to testify about the Light?

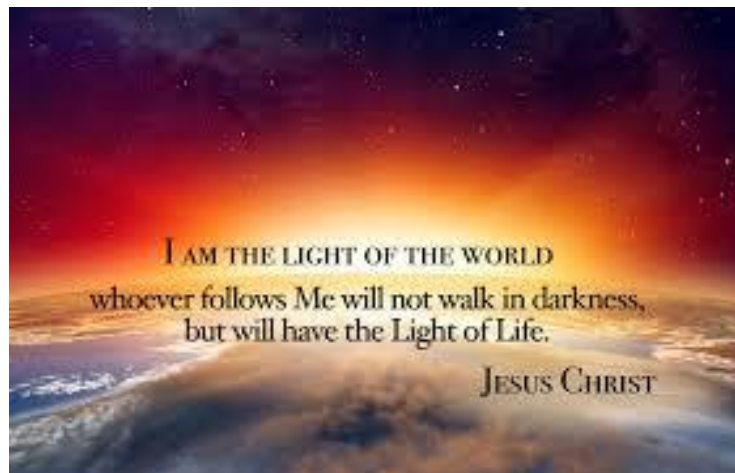
“...nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ... No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead, it is put on the lampstand, ... A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

- What is this scripture telling us?
- How do we spread the light of Jesus?

- What will your priorities be this Christmas?
- In what ways might these scriptures have changed your thinking?

The words of Michael W. Smith's song reflect those words from Isaiah 9:12

Light of the world
You stepped down into darkness
Open my eyes let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore You
Hope of a life
Spent with You
Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that You're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me



Prayer:

This Christmas time may we treasure the light Jesus brings to our lives and help us share this truth with others.

