



HOPE-FULL

Hope-Full in a King

Matthew 2:1-12; Colossians 1:15-23; Romans 8:18-25

OPEN

"A good journey begins with knowing where you are and being willing to go somewhere else." -- Richard Rohr

In the Spirit of the New Year:

- Share on highlight or life-changing moment from 2016.
- Share one way you hope to journey in a different way in 2017 or share one thing you hope will be different in this New Year.

Defining Hope

In Matthew 2, we read the story of Epiphany where God announces to the world, through a star, that the King has come. The Magi see the sign and follow the star to the point of finding and worshipping the new born king. Have you ever wondered why they were searching? Why they would make such an investment of time and money to journey somewhere else in their life?

Do you think God pulls us up to look toward the horizon because where we are is not where we need to be?

Do you think God made us to be hopeful?

Answer these two questions the best you can:

1. What is the ultimate Christian hope?
2. What hope is there for change, transformation, and new possibilities with the present world?¹

Are your answers similar or different in nature?

Do you think these questions are asking the same question or addressing two different realities? Why?

DISCUSS

Over recent centuries several worldviews have become popular, even to the point of rooting themselves in our own Christian beliefs. Here is a very brief description of each:

1. The Transitory Soul

This idea was popularized by the Greek Philosopher Plato. He believed that the physical world (space, time, and matter), with all its mess, decay, and transient nature was an offense to the pure philosophical mind that dwelt upon eternal realities. When one can be released from their mortal body and live eternally as a free spirit or soul...then that is "heaven".

2. Evolutionary Progress

The worldview of evolutionary progress believes everything is moving along, progressing, every onward and upward to something bigger and better at its end. Humanity can achieve a better future by applying itself and pushing forward.

In your answers to the two hope questions above, or in what you have heard from others, do you see Christians believing, or living out, the beliefs of these two worldviews? How?

Do you see any errors in these worldviews?

¹ NT Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 2008.

What the Bible Teaches

Jesus and the Bible actually teaches the core of Christian hope and faith are rooted in a much different reality. The Bible teaches that the creation – as in the material world -- is good and human life (here on earth) is very good (image of God). It says that the fundamental limitation on the goodness of creation is the presence of evil. And that a new, real world (heaven and earth married together) will bring the reality we (humanity) all long and HOPE for...even creation and the cosmos itself.

Take a moment and read Colossians 1:15-23 and Romans 8:18-25. Note: There is a lot of content in these passages. Focus on these questions:

- What do we learn about Christian Hope?
- What is different in these passages than in the popular worldviews today?
- What does first-fruits seem to indicate?
- How do the themes of redemption and resurrection address hope—both for the Christian and the world itself?

You have covered some good and deep waters in this study. Close your group with prayer as you anticipate the full redemption and resurrection of your life in Christ—which has already begun and will be brought to completion one glorious day.

NEXT STEPS

- Can you find three clues in Matthew 2 that reveal the Magi were not in the manger the night Jesus was born?
- Reflect this week on Revelation 21-22 in light of what you learned in this study.