

What is Hope?

To trust in, wait for, look for, or desire something or someone; or to expect something beneficial in the future.

The Old Testament.

There are several Hebrew verbs that may in certain contexts be translated "to hope" in English.

One of them, qawa , may denote "hope" in the sense of "trust, " as when Jeremiah addresses God, "Our hope is in you" ([Jer 14:22](#)).

He also uses a noun formed from the root qwh [h"w'q] to teach that the Lord is the hope of Israel (14:8; 17:13; 50:7), which means that Israel's God is worthy of trust.

Another noun from the same root, tiqwa [h"w.qiT], is often also translated "hope" meaning "trust." Similarly, the verb qawa [h"w'q] is parallel to batah[[j:fB](#)], "to trust, " in Psalm 25:2-3.

In the Old Testament believers are encouraged to wait for God hopefully, expectantly. In times of trouble one should wait for the Lord, who will turn things around ([Psalm 25:21 ; 27:14 ; 40:1 ; 130:5](#))

Sometimes expressions of hope are accompanied by the prayer that the supplicant will not be ashamed, that is, disappointed. "May those who hope in you not be disgraced" ([Psalm 69:6 ; cf. Psalm 22:5 ; Psalms 25:2-3 Psalms 25:20](#)).

God promises that those who wait for him will not be disappointed ([Isa 49:23](#)). God is able to bring about the realization of one's hopes. Looking with expectation is akin to hoping ([Job 6:19 ; Jer 8:15](#)). From "looking for" or "expecting" it is a small semantic shift to desiring ([Isa 26:8](#)).

Twenty-seven times qawa [h"w'q] comes into the Greek Old Testament as hupomeno [[uJpomevnuw](#)], "*to wait*," "*to be patient*," "*to endure*." Where suffering is present, the term may indicate that the individual is bearing affliction patiently while hopefully waiting for the Lord's deliverance. Psalm 40 is a psalm of thanksgiving that recounts the suffering of an individual whose hope was realized. "I waited patiently for the Lord" ([Psalm 40:1 ; 130:5-6](#)).

Because of the close connection between hope and trust and because of the requirement to trust in God alone, a number of passages warn against trust in other things. We should not trust in riches ([Job 31:24-28 ; Psalm 52:1-7 ; Prov 11:28](#)), idols ([Psalm 115:3-11 ; Hab 2:18-19](#)), foreign powers ([Isa 20:5](#)), military might ([Isa 30:15-16 ; 31:1-3 ; Hosea 10:13](#)), princes ([Psalm 146:3-7](#)), or other humans ([Jer 17:5-8](#)).

God is the true object of hope, but occasionally there are others. One may put one's hope in his steadfast love ([Psalm 33:18](#)), in his ordinances ([Psalm 119:43](#)), and in his word ([Psalms 119:49 Psalms 119:74 Psalms 119:81 Psalms 119:114 Psalms 119:147](#)). Besides waiting in eager expectation for God, one may wait or hope for his teaching ([Isa 42:4](#)) and for his salvation ([Psalm 119:166](#)).

For much of the Old Testament period hope was centered on this world. The beleaguered hoped to be delivered from their enemies ([Psalm 25](#)); the sick hoped to recover from illness ([Isa](#)

38:10-20). Israelites trusted God to provide land, peace, and prosperity. In early passages there are few expressions of hope for the next world. Those who descend to the grave have no hope ([Isa 38:18-19](#)). Only those still living could hope ([Ecclesiastes 9:4-6](#)[Ecclesiastes 9:10](#)), as salvation was for this life. Toward the end of the Old Testament God made known his plan to bring his everlasting kingdom to earth ([Dan 2:44](#) ; [7:13-14](#)) and to raise the dead ([12:2](#)). At that point hope became more focused on the next world, especially on the resurrection. God will "swallow up death forever" ([Isa 25:7](#)), and the dead will rise again (26:19); this is the salvation for which the faithful wait ([25:9](#)).

The New Testament.

The New Testament consistently uses the verb *elpizo* [[ejlpivzw](#)] and the noun *elpis* [[ejlpiv](#)"] for hope. Just as the Old Testament emphasizes hope as trust, Paul writes about setting our hope on God ([1 Tim 4:10](#)) and on Christ ([Eph 1:12](#)).

As Jeremiah proclaims that God is the hope of Israel, Paul announces that Jesus Christ is our hope ([1 Tim 1:1](#)).

Parallel to those passages in the Old Testament where those who hope are not put to shame, "Paul says hope does not disappoint us ([Rom 5:5](#))".

The reason is that we already have a taste of the future glory because of the love with which the Holy Spirit fills our hearts. In other words, the gifts of love and of the Spirit are down payments of future glory for which we hope ([Rom 5:2](#) ; cf. [Eph 1:13-14](#)).

In the Old Testament hope has to do with waiting for, looking for, desiring.

This is paralleled in the Gospels, where the word "hope" is not very frequent but the idea of looking expectantly is. Simeon looked for Israel's consolation at the advent of the Messiah ([Luke 2:25-26](#)). Likewise, Anna, the prophetess, upon recognizing who Jesus was, proclaimed him to all those who were anticipating redemption ([Luke 2:36-38](#)).

In connection with hope in [Romans 8:18-25](#):

Paul speaks of waiting with eager expectation for the revelation of the children of God (v. 19), waiting for the adoption as sons (v. 23).

Christians:

We are waiting "for the righteousness for which we hope" ([Gal 5:5](#)) and for "the blessed hope, " namely, the glorious appearing of our Lord ([Titus 2:13](#)).

Paul shows both an eager expectation and a hope for God to be glorified in him, whether in life or death ([Php 1:20](#)). He goes on to express his desire to leave this world to be present with Christ (1:23).

As hope is connected with patient endurance in the Old Testament, so in the New Testament trials lead to hope ([Rom 5:3-4](#)) and hope is steadfast ([1 Th 1:3](#)). When we hope for something we wait for it through patience ([Rom 8:25](#) ; [15:4](#)).

In the Old Testament hope is linked with "putting confidence in" or "taking refuge in." Paul also parallels hope with trust. He hopes to send Timothy and trusts in the Lord that he himself will come ([Php 2:23](#)).

Hebrews talks about courage and hope (3:6). Likewise, Paul links hope and boldness (2 Cor 3:12). In a passage about the confidence we can have in God's promises, Hebrews 6:18-19 mentions taking refuge by seizing the sure anchor of hope that is set before us.

Reminiscent of the Old Testament false objects of hope, Paul counsels the wealthy not "to set their hope in wealth" (1 Tim 6:17). In addition to putting hope in God and Christ, we hope for salvation (1 Th 5:8); God's glory (Rom 5:2; Col 1:27); resurrection (Acts 23:6; 24:15; 1 Thess 4:13); the redemption of our bodies (Rom 8:23); righteousness (Gal 5:5); eternal life (Titus 1:2; 3:7); the glorious appearing of Jesus (Titus 2:13); and that we shall become like him when he does appear (1 John 3:2-3).

From the above list it is apparent that, in contrast to the Old Testament, New Testament hope is primarily eschatological. After being introduced late in Old Testament times, hope in the resurrection of the dead grew in the intertestamental period in such proportion that Paul could speak of the resurrection as the "hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20; 24:15; 26:6-8).

If our hope is only for our present existence, it is most pitiable (1 Cor 15:19). When our believing friends and relatives die we grieve in hope of the Lord's return, unlike unbelievers who have no hope. The only sure hope is Jesus: when he returns, believers who have died and those still living will both be given imperishable bodies like that of the risen Lord (1 Corinthians 15:20-23; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:13-18).

Hope is the proper response to the promises of God.

Abraham serves as a prime example here. Even though he was very old, he had confidence that God would fulfill his promises. "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed" (Rom 4:18). Like Abraham, we can trust in God's promises and "seize the hope set before us" (Heb 6:18).

More generally, we are told that the Scriptures engender hope (Rom 15:4). The Holy Spirit is also a source of hope, for his power causes hope to abound (Rom 15:13). Finally, hope comes as a gift from God through grace (2 Th 2:16).

Hope leads to joy (Rom 12:12) boldness (2 Cor 3:12), and faith and love (Col 1:4-5). Hope also leads to comfort; we are to encourage one another with the knowledge of the resurrection (1 Th 4:18). Though boasting in our works is disallowed, we may boast or exult in hope of sharing God's glory (Rom 5:2; cf. Heb 3:6).

Hope has a sanctifying effect. We who look expectantly for the return of Christ, knowing that when we see him we shall become like him, purify ourselves "as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). Hope also stimulates good works. Following his teaching on resurrection of the dead, Paul exhorts his readers to do the Lord's work abundantly since such "labor is not in vain" (1 Cor 15:51-58).