The Theology of Hope
The study of the end times is really a study of hope. Everything written in the scripture regarding the future gives us a hope that, when embraced, will keep us focused on Christ and his mission in the present.

Some have said that the theology of hope is the base theology upon which every other theology is built. What are your thoughts regarding this statement?

Friedrich Nietzsche said, “Hope is the worst of evils, for it prolongs the torment of man.” What do you think of his perspective on hope? Does hope potentially cheat man of happiness in the present?

Is there some sense in which hopes makes us discontent in the present, but in a righteous way?

Augustine wrote, “Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are Anger and Courage; anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are.” What do you think of Augustine’s perspective?

Paul wrote:
Colossians 1:5 (NIV)
the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel

In what ways do you think our faith and love spring from hope?

How might a lack of hope affect how we live and relate to others?

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV)
Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

How would you explain, in your own words, the definition of faith as it relates to hope?
If faith is rooted in a certainty of what we are waiting for, what exactly is it that we are waiting for?

**Romans 8:22-25 (NIV)**

22 We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. 23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

**Why do we believers “groan” in the present time?**

Believers have already been given a new spirit, but our bodies are still corrupted by sin. We long for the day when we will be given a new body and perfected in the image of Christ. Until then, we still struggle with the appeal and affects of sin in our bodies.

We also long for the day when we will see our Father face to face and our adoption is complete. Until then, we still experience physical separation from God.

**If our hope is so far off, why should we persevere?**

We persevere because it is the hope of a better eternal future. We persevere because the hope of the future gives us strength and wisdom to get through the present. The alternative is to abandon all hope and be stuck with the present reality and future judgment.

**1 Peter 1:3-4 (NIV)**

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you.

**Why does Peter call our hope a living hope?**

Our hope is not simply an expectation resting in the future. It is something that has life changing power in the present. Hope breathes life into our faith and love. Hope gives us the courage to persevere. Hope gives our lives focus and mission during our time on earth. In essence, hope is all about life now, and in the future.

**In what ways might the anticipation of a vacation shape how you live months in advance?**

*Share from your own experience.*

When one plans for a vacation it impacts many areas of life. Depending on where you are going you may need to get vaccinations 6 months in advance. It could mean monthly setting aside money cover the expenses of the trip. It will likely involve internet research to find out places to stay, sites to visit or people to see. It may mean exercising through the year to build up endurance if hiking is involved.
In what ways has the hope of Eternity impacted how you choose to live in the present?

If we took our hope seriously, what are some other ways we might start adjusting our present?

1 John 3:2-3 (NIV)
2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

When you anticipate having company arrive at your house, what are the types of things you do to get ready?
When one is expecting company, they often clean up their house and themselves for their guests. We want to look (and smell) presentable. We also want our house to be orderly and enjoyable for our visitors. The anticipation of that meeting makes us want to be ready in every way possible so that it is an enjoyable experience for everyone.

What did John mean when he said that everyone who has this hope purifies himself?
If our ultimate goal is to be with and like Jesus, then that hope will work on us now so that we strive to live pure, sinless lives in the present. It would be a huge contradiction for someone to say I want to be with and like Jesus and to then live in a contrary manner. The hope of being with and like Jesus operates on our lives so that we bring them into submission to him, his character and his purposes.

This is NOT to say we need to purify ourselves in order to be accepted – we’re already accepted. It is saying that when we live under this hope, we WANT to be like Jesus. We are already sanctified (purified) when we received his forgiveness and the Holy Spirit, but this passage is referring to how we live our lives on a daily basis.

Colossians 1:25-27 (NIV)
25 I have become its[the church] servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness-- 26 the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

What was the mystery that Paul was talking about?
The mystery was how the Gentiles could become co-heirs with the Jews. The Jews believed they were the people of God and that God’s salvation and blessing was reserved for them alone. Through Christ’s death, resurrection and sending of his Holy Spirit, God destroyed this understanding by indwelling Gentile believers. The hope of glory is available to all who put their faith in Jesus Christ and Jew and Gentile become one family.
Colossians 1:21-22 (NIV)

21 Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. 22 But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—

Have you ever felt that some people were too far away spiritually to be saved by God?

In what ways does the fact that God was able to bring Jew and Gentile together into one family give us hope for spiritually distant people?

If God can tear down that dividing wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:14) he can tear down any barrier that exists between us and him, or between us and others. There is also no one that is too far from kingdom of God that they cannot be saved if they turn to Jesus. There is no one you have yet encountered that is beyond the power of hope. There is no one so far removed that they can't be brought into your spiritual family. Saul/Paul is the greatest example of the grace of God that gives hope to the hopeless. Christianity’s greatest persecutor became its greatest promotor.

Hebrews 6:17-20 (NLT)

17 God also bound himself with an oath, so that those who received the promise could be perfectly sure that he would never change his mind. 18 So God has given both his promise and his oath. These two things are unchangeable because it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, we who have fled to him for refuge can have great confidence as we hold to the hope that lies before us. 19 This hope is a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls. It leads us through the curtain into God’s inner sanctuary. 20 Jesus has already gone in there for us. He has become our eternal High Priest in the order of Melchizedek.

In what ways is our understanding of the word hope different from how the world uses it?

The world uses the word hope as a wishful thinking that may or may not come true. It is equivalent to saying I hope it doesn’t rain next week, but there is no guarantee. Biblical hope is rooted in God’s oath and his promise, and it is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, our hope is based on a confident expectation as opposed to an unsure desire.

In what ways is hope an anchor for our soul?

If we are unsure about our future, we waver with regard to how we should live and make decisions. We question everything and tend to sway back and forth in life direction and commitment. Where our hope is based in a concrete reality that cannot fail, it gives us stability and direction in the present. We know where we are going, we know how to get there, and we know how to live accordingly.
What would your life be like if you did not have a certainty about your faith?

*Psalm 43:5 (NLT)*
Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and my God!

In what ways does hope change our perspective on life?

*Romans 15:13 (NIV)*
May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In what ways does hope give us joy?

In what ways does hope give us peace?

What is the implication if we are not experiencing joy or peace in our lives?
If we are not experiencing joy or peace it is because we have lost sight of what is waiting for us. We have become focused on our present circumstances forgetting that God has already created a way to deal with each problem.

*2 Corinthians 3:12 (NIV)*
Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.

In what way does keeping focused on our hope give us boldness?

What are some of the barriers to staying focussed on our hope?

If you truly believe the hope that he has called you to, how might you live differently this week?

What are some practical ways we can stay focused on the hope we have in Christ in this coming week?