

# WAITING IN HOPE

In the SAT-7 Advent prayer guide we can read about how Middle Eastern Christians express their hope in Jesus Christ who has come among us as “God with us”. They do so by watching and waiting for His coming to them afresh in the many difficult circumstances of their lives, and ultimately for His return in glory. And in the meantime, they work hard for Him.

This Bible study will inspire you with the confident hope of the Middle Eastern Church and guide you in how to live in the light of God’s coming to us in Jesus. You can use it by yourself or in a small group. If you are leading the discussion, you may like to read the leaders’ notes on the reverse, which offer a few comments on the passage as well as Salah Kessai’s reflection from the Advent prayer guide.

## STARTER QUESTIONS

1. What are you hoping for in your life at this time? How sure are you that it is really going to happen? What difference does that make to the waiting?
2. Read Salah’s reflection in the Advent prayer guide for Monday 13 December (or see Leaders’ Notes). How do Christians in Algeria celebrate Christmas (para 1)? What are you hoping for this Christmas? How will it be different from last year?

## READ HEBREWS 10:19-25

3. What do you think it means to “enter the Most Holy Place” (v.19)? What is the basis for our right to do this (v.20)?
4. How does Jesus function as “a great priest over the house of God” (v.21)? How does His priestly work give you assurance?

On this basis, in verses 22-25 the author encourages his readers to three distinct actions (v.22, v.23, vv.24-25).

5. Look again at Salah’s reflection (para 2). How are Christians in Algeria seeking to “draw near ... with the full assurance that faith brings” (v.22a)? How can we do the same in this Advent and Christmas season?
6. What does it mean to have “our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience” and “our bodies washed with pure water” (v.22b)? How might this help you to draw near?
7. What is “the hope we profess” to which we are to “hold unswervingly” (v.23a)? How is Salah looking for its outworking in the life of the Algerian churches (para 3)? How might it work out in our different circumstances?
8. What reason does the author of Hebrews give for holding fast to our hope (v.23b)? How have you experienced this in your own times of trial?
9. In what two ways does the author tell his readers to “spur [others] on towards love and good deeds” (vv.24-25)? How are Salah and his fellow pastors doing this (para 4)? How can we do the same in our churches?
10. What is “the Day” mentioned in verse 25? How should its approach prompt us to engage more urgently in these tasks?  
*And finally...*
11. See paragraph 5 of Salah’s reflection. How has this study renewed your hope in Christ who is God with us? And how will you live for Him as you wait for that hope to be fulfilled?

## PRAY

- Give thanks for the hope and faithfulness of Christians in Algeria, and pray for the Lord to sustain them and give them a joyful Christmas.
- Pray for your church. Ask God to show you all how to draw near to Him, hold fast to your hope, and support one another.
- Praise God for His coming among us in Christ, and pray that He will strengthen your hope in “God with us” during this Advent season.



## LEADERS' NOTES

- Q3. This is a reference to Christians' free access to the heavenly sanctuary, the dwelling-place of God. Christ has already entered there on our behalf (6:19-20; 9:11-12,24), and through His sacrifice of Himself He has given us the right to go in too. So we can have confidence in approaching God.
- Q4. According to the verses above, Christ's unique high-priestly ministry is to offer Himself for our redemption and then to open the way for us into the presence of God. The "house of God" is His people, on whom Christ bestows these gifts.
- Q5. To draw near to God is to approach Him in worship and prayer to obtain His mercy and grace (see 4:16). A true heart is one that is secure in faith on the basis of the access we have to God's presence. Such assurance is an inward disposition that expresses itself in outward action.
- Q6. These two clauses probably refer to Christians' initiation into God's new covenant in Christ, a process that involves the whole person: both an inward cleansing of the conscience as we are purified from sin by Christ's blood, and an outward washing in the water of baptism.
- Q7. In Hebrews our profession always relates to Christ (see 3:1; 4:14; 10:23). "The hope we profess" is probably God's gift of future salvation, which is made available through Christ's priestly work, and will enable us to share in Christ's kingdom when He comes.
- Q8. God's faithfulness entails that He cannot lie (6:17-18), so His promises are unfailingly reliable and can be fully trusted. God shows us His faithfulness by giving us what He has promised according to His new covenant in Christ.
- Q9. These verses are a call to exhort one another, in the context of continuing congregational meetings, to be concerned for one another's needs, and to express that care in practical and tangible ways.
- Q10. This is the day when Christ will return to complete God's purpose. Readiness is essential since the day involves both judgment and salvation.

## SALAH KESSAI'S REFLECTION

### WORKING IN THE WAITING

*"But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently" (Romans 8:25)*

**Since the Algerian authorities closed several churches in October 2019, Algerian Christians have been longing to meet together again. In this reflection, Algerian SAT-7 producer Salah Kessai shares his challenge to the Church – to pray for change, whilst actively working to bring God's kingdom here and now:**



In Algeria, Christians eagerly wait for Christmas to come. We wait for joyous worship services, time to gather with family and friends, presents to open, and the celebration of the hope we have in Christ.

But since our churches were closed by the authorities in 2019, we won't be able to celebrate Christmas together for the third year running. The churches are doing their best to take care of their sheep in an impossible situation and are waiting for heavenly intervention. In the midst of these hardships, we continue to meet together on Zoom, and film and broadcast church services on SAT-7.

As we look at the injustices suffered by our Algerian brothers and sisters, we must ask ourselves – do we have the courage to hope? Do we have the stubborn willingness to keep showing up and watching, even in the midst of the darkness, for a new dawn? Do we have the paradoxical capacity to wait on God to shift the things beyond our control, whilst also working to bring change ourselves?

We believe in a mighty God – nothing is impossible with Him. I join with many Algerian pastors in proclaiming that the best is yet to come. Today as a church, as a tiny minority in Algeria, we should be ready, waiting, watching for our Lord who promised to be with us.

Our prayer this Advent season is that we will live as if the One who shines a light into our despair is really on His way. And that until He comes, we will wait and work with openness, courage and hope.

Download copies of this reflection for your group at [sat7uk.org/advent-resources](http://sat7uk.org/advent-resources)