
FROM earliest times mankind has longed for life beyond the grave. Fanciful dreams for a future life became theories; theories jelled into religious theology. The American Indian had his happy hunting ground. The Hindu purified himself through the transmigration of the soul. Others fancied themselves wandering among the planets. Some had no higher goal than to remain invisible to haunt their old neighbors.

As divergent as these theories are, they reveal a universal desire to thwart death. Man has been unwilling to accept the fact of death as the cessation of life and life processes of love, joy, hate, thought.

God's people have had hope in a resurrection from earliest Bible times. They have never accepted the pagan theory that future life is attained by the release of an immortal soul from a mortal body. The Bible hope is, and always has been, that future life comes only through resurrection.

Job, considered to be the oldest Bible writer, testified: "'If a man dies, will he live again?' Replying to his own question, he said: 'All the days of my struggle I will wait Until my change comes. You will call, and I will answer You' (Job 14:14, 15). 'Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God;

Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!" (Job 19:26, 27).

Isaiah said, "the earth will give birth to the departed spirits. . . . And will no longer cover her slain." (26:19, 21). Jesus promised, "all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth" (John 5:28, 29). Paul added: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Resurrection is the only hope for man. Paul reasoned that if there is no resurrection, "Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." Future life, then, is preceded by resurrection, and that does not take place until after Jesus returns to this earth.

When Paul assured the faithful that all men would be made alive by Christ, he added: "But each in his own order" (group, company, class). "after that those who are Christ's [who have believed] at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15:23).

Jesus taught that not all resurrection would take place at the same time. He said that He would be "raised from the dead" (literally translated—"raised from among the dead," i.e., raised while others

remained behind in their graves). Paul declared our Master to be the "firstfruits" (1 Corinthians 15:23); "the firstborn from [among] the dead" (Colossians 1:18). 'The church will be the next group to be raised from the dead. (See 1 Corinthians 15:23.)

Abraham believed in resurrection from among the dead. (Hebrews 11:19). We seek to be in this group by being buried (baptized) "in the likeness of his death" that we may be "in the likeness of his resurrection" (Romans 6:4, 5, 13). This is the "better resurrection" which men of faith have been striving for down through the ages. (see Hebrews 11:30-40.)

Jesus' resurrection assures the "better resurrection" for His followers. We can expect to receive immortality at His coming, for He will change "the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." (Philippians 3:21).

The resurrection of Jesus assures us of resurrection, It also assures us of judgment. "because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness. . . having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:31).

ATLANTA BIBLE COLLEGE
CHURCH OF GOD GENERAL CONFERENCE

2020 Avalon Parkway Suite 400
MCDONOUGH, GA 30253
atlantabiblecollege.com
678-833-1839



Resurrection Hope

by Harry Sheets

