

Hope Through A Resurrection

The Bible teaches that sin brought death, and that death became the common lot of all mankind. At the same time, God, in His mercy, promised a Redeemer (Christ Jesus) who would triumph over sin and death, and by his own death and resurrection to immortality, lead the way to life eternal.

This teaching of a bodily resurrection is quite contrary to the widespread theory of an immortal soul that continues to live on after the death of the body. As will be shown, this immortal soul doctrine is not taught in the Bible.

Despite the glowing pictures of heaven painted by preachers upon the canvas of their imagination, no one desires to taste death in order to go there.

A couple of points that need to be made before embarking on this exposition:

1. Death means death, so that when God told Adam that he would die, God meant it. He did not mean that Adam's body would die and return to dust and his "soul" would continue to live. This would nullify God's word and nullify the need for a resurrection from the dead. Other equivalent words to "die" are: "perish," "return to dust," "see corruption," "join their fathers."
2. Immortality equals eternal life/everlasting life. The terms mean the same thing and are interchangeable. The Biblical concept is unending life or life that does not end.

The Bible teaches that eternal life (immortality) is not the natural inheritance of man, but something that must be sought and given by God..

The soul that sinneth, it shall die.(Eze 18:20)

In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began.(Titus 1:2)

Paul taught:

*"God will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing **seek for** glory and honor and **immortality**, eternal life."* (Romans 2:6-7)

If eternal life is something a person must seek, and which God will grant only on conditions, obviously it is not inherent in man in his natural state. And that fact is clearly taught throughout Scripture.

Consider the following well known text:

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

There are two alternatives:

1. to either "**perish**" **or**
2. to have "**everlasting life**".

Everlasting life is conditional upon belief and obedience. If immortality were a natural heritage, then a person could not utterly perish. The Bible teaches that those who do not fulfill the conditions set by God will not receive eternal life:

*For as many as have sinned without law **shall also perish** without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law* (Roman 2:12)

*But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and **shall utterly perish** in their own corruption (2 Peter 2:12)*

*For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh **reap corruption**; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit **reap life everlasting**. (Gal. 6:8)*

A Resurrection - The Only True Hope.

It follows from logic, and from clear Bible teaching, that if man is mortal, and yet the reward that God has set before him is immortality, the only possible way to eternal life is through a bodily resurrection.

This is the clear teaching of the Bible. Paul states:

*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that **slept**. For since by man [Adam] came death, **by man [Jesus] came also the resurrection of the dead**. For as in Adam [and all are in him by natural birth] all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1 Corinthians 15:19–23).*

These words teach the doctrine of a bodily resurrection at Christ's coming. Paul explains to us that since Christ rose from the dead (firstfruits from the dead to receive immortality), and therefore he opened the door to eternal life for those that "sleep" (are dead). Since he accomplished this, those that are his believers and hold on to the faith until the end of their life, will be resurrected at his return.

Again, Paul taught:

*"The dead shall be raised... for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal **must put on** immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have **put on** immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (1 Cor. 15:52–55).*

These verses proclaim the doctrine of a bodily resurrection from a state of death to one of eternal life. It leaves no room for the doctrine of an immortal soul. The doctrine of the resurrection cannot coexist with the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

This is the consistent teaching of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. It reveals that the first work of Christ at his return is to raise the dead, to then judge them, and reward them according to their works. If the soul is immortal, what is the need for a resurrection of the body? What purpose would it serve? It would make the Bible incomprehensible. However, if the immortality of the soul is eliminated, the Bible becomes much easier to understand. Here is some of the evidence to that end:

*"Jesus Christ shall judge the living and the **dead at his appearing** and his kingdom" (2 Timothy 4:1).*

*"**Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake**, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).*

*"**Thy dead men shall live**, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust... **the earth shall cast out the dead**" (Isaiah 26:19).*

"For we [believers] must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things in body, according to what he hath done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Hope in a bodily resurrection unto life eternal is the basis of all Bible teaching. Paul declared that he counted all

things but loss, “*if by any means I might attain unto the **resurrection of the dead***” (Philippians 3:11). He was using the expression in its complete sense, as denoting a resurrection to eternal life; and he continued by declaring that this was the great objective of his life, for which he was prepared to sacrifice all else.

On the other hand, the Bible will be searched in vain, for a single reference to the alleged immortal soul. Not once are mourners comforted with the idea that the souls of the departed are in heaven, but rather that, if believers, they will rise from the dead at the return of Christ (1 Thess. 4:16, 18).

For the Lord himself will descend from heavenAnd the dead in Christ will rise first. (1Th 4:16)

The Bible teaches that “*no man hath ascended into heaven*” (John 3:13), not even David, the man after God’s own heart.

For David did not ascend into the heavens (Act 2:34)

Paul made the hope of the resurrection a key-note of his defense of the faith. Before the Sanhedrin he declared:

*“Of the **hope and resurrection of the dead** I am called in question” (Acts 23:6).*

Addressing King Agrippa, he asked:

“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?” (Acts 26:8).

Before Festus he proclaimed:

*“There is a resurrection of the dead, both **of the just** and **the unjust**” (Acts 24:15).*

That was the belief and teaching of all the apostles. If our belief does not provide for a bodily resurrection from the dead, it is not in accordance with the revelation and purpose of God. As already stated, there is no room for both belief in a bodily resurrection, **and** the immortality of the soul. **If man goes to his reward at death, for what purpose is a bodily resurrection and judgment at Christ’s coming?**

Who Will Be Raised?

Sadly, there are many, now and historically, who do not know the purpose of God nor His will, or they simply choose to not believe in the true God at all. We call these pagans (believers in false gods) or atheists (do not believe in any god at all). What happens to all these people that died, not believing in the true God nor in His son, Jesus Christ?

Jesus said:

This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” (John 17:3)

The opposite of this verse is that there is no “life eternal” if they don’t know the only true God. Death is the only other course for all these pagans and atheists and there are Bible verses that support this. God will not resurrect them to judgment. They are dead and will not rise again as Isaiah states:

*“They (those without knowing/believing God) are dead, **they shall not live**; they are deceased, **they shall not rise**; therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish” (Isaiah 26:14).*

*“They (Pagans of Babylon) shall lie down together, **they shall not rise**. They are extinct, they are quenched as tow.” (Isa. 43:17)*

They “wander out of the way of understanding” and, according to Bible teaching, “shall remain in the congregation of the dead” (Prov. 21:16).

The fundamental purpose of the resurrection is for judgment, and where there is no knowledge of what is required, there is no basis for proper judgment. The Bible teaches that such die, never again to live:

“Man that is in honor, and UNDERSTANDETH NOT, is like the beasts that perish ... they go to the generation of their fathers (in the grave); they shall NEVER SEE LIGHT” (Psalm 49:18–20).

*“They shall sleep **a perpetual sleep and not wake**” (Jeremiah 51:57).*

*“Like the slain that lie in the grave, **whom Thou rememberest no more**; and they are cut off from Thy hand” (Psalm 88:5).*

*“**Without hope** and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12).*

“(Ignorant gentiles that have) The understanding darkened, alienated from the life of God THROUGH THE IGNORANCE that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Ephesians 4:18).

Unfortunately, many persons are in a state of ignorance before God or simply do not believe He exists, being blinded by their heart. That being the case, they are without hope. The power of sin and death rules over them and there is no need for these ignorant ones, and/or atheists to be raised. They live their life “as a vapor” (James 4:14), and are soon gone, just like the animals and plants in the history of the world. They experience their moments of triumph and disaster, of pleasure and pain, of success and sorrow, and then pass into oblivion, becoming as though they had never been. Their existence becomes but a fading memory and soon “is forgotten”

“For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

Therefore, whilst many people will be resurrected and judged by Christ, those who remain in ignorance or have no understanding of the gospel (pagans, atheists, etc.) shall not be resurrected but will simply cease to exist at death as the beasts and flowers of the field.

The Judgment Seat

But those who have come to an understanding of God’s will, “both the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15), will be raised from the grave, and together with living believers, will be brought before the judgment seat of Christ.

A study of I Thess. 4:15-17 will reveal this fact.

For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. (1Thess. 4:15)

*For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the **dead in Christ will rise first**. (1Thess. 4:16)*

Then each person judged by Christ will be separated into one of two camps: those to his right and those to his left, as it is written:

³⁴Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (Matthew 25:34)

⁴¹Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: (Matthew 25:41)

So Paul encourages the believers by stating:

“To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life”(Rom. 2:7)

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (Gal. 6:8).

Those who have willfully rejected the precepts of Christ by failing to practice the principles set before them in his teaching, will experience “*tribulation and anguish*” and “*corruption*” as they are punished and condemned to death eternally.

The righteous, however, will be given immortality by the bestowal of “*divine nature*” as it is written:

*“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and **this mortal must put on immortality.**” (1 Cor. 15:53)*

*“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: **that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (2 Peter 1:4)*

and thus will be changed into the likeness of Christ’s present glory

*“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, **when he shall appear, we shall be like him**; for we shall see him as he is.” (1 John 3:2)*

*“Who shall **change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body**, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Philippians 3:21)*

Their victory over sin and death will be complete and everlasting, and the power of the grave will lose its hold on them. As the immortal associates of Christ, they will reign with him on earth.

The apostle Peter told Christ that he (Peter) had left everything to follow him, and wanted to know what he would receive in consequence. Christ replied:

*“Ye which have followed me in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken [all] for my sake **shall inherit everlasting life**” (Matthew 19:28–29).*

“They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Rev. 20:4).

Having gained the victory over sin and death, they will be competent to rule with Christ on earth.

“God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

Therefore,

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:14)