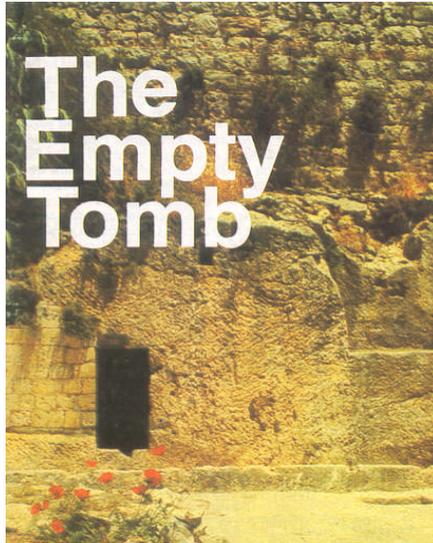
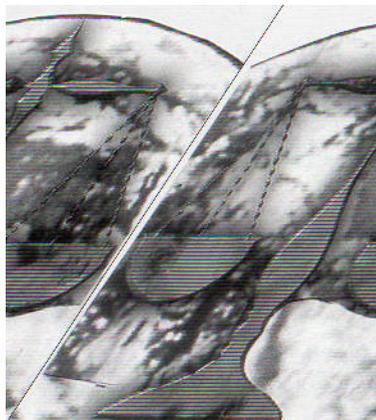


RESURRECTION



AND JUDGMENT



Resurrection and Judgment

THE APOSTLE PAUL, in his defence before the Jewish Council, declared: **“Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question”**. Acts 23:6, 24:15,21 This was Paul's hope. If one were to ask the majority of professing Christians today what they considered to be the Christian hope, it is most doubtful whether many would reply; **“The resurrection of the dead”**. Yet that was Paul's hope. It was the hope of all the early Christians and for which many of them suffered persecution and martyrdom.

The importance of the resurrection of the dead has been nullified in the theology of most Christian churches by the general acceptance of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. But this is a doctrine which finds no place in scripture. It can be convincingly established that it has emanated from Pagan origins. The comments of William Tyndale are interesting in this connection. He wrote:

‘In putting departed souls in heaven, hell, and purgatory, you destroy the arguments wherewith Christ and Paul prove the resurrection. The true faith putteth the resurrection, which we be warned to look for every hour. The heathen philosophers denying that, did put that the souls did ever live. And the Pope joineth the spiritual doctrine of Christ and the fleshy doctrine of Philosophers together-things so contrary that they cannot agree . . . and because the fleshy-minded Pope consenteth unto heathen doctrine, therefore he corrupteth the scriptures to establish it . . . If the souls be in heaven, tell me why they be not in as good case as the angels be? And then what cause is there of the resurrection?’

It will be remembered that Tyndale suffered martyrdom in 1536 for his ‘crime’ of translating the scriptures into English.

MAN MORTAL ON ACCOUNT OF SIN

The Bible clearly teaches that man is a death-stricken creature as a result of sin. The record in Genesis explains that man transgressed in the beginning and that death ensued as a consequence. The first chapter of Genesis gives the account of the creation and, in passing, it must be emphasised that this account has been endorsed by Jesus Christ himself. Matthew 19:4 Man was created out of the dust of the ground and by the in-breathing of the spirit of God was made a living creature. The record reads:

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” Genesis 2:7.

The words translated **“living soul”** in this verse are, in the original Hebrew text, *‘nephesh hayyah’*, a term which means nothing more than a living entity. The identical term (*nephesh hayyah*) occurs in Genesis 1:24 where it is translated **“living creature”** and is applied in that verse to cattle, beasts and creeping things. Hebrew scholars agree that there is nothing in the original word which carries any possible implication of immortality.

Later on in chapter 2, there is given the account of the creation of woman out of a rib of man. Man and woman, so created by God, were placed in the garden of Eden and were allowed complete freedom of action except for one simple command. They were forbidden to eat of one particular tree, styled *‘the tree of the knowledge of good and evil’*. The command was quite specific and the punishment for disobeying it was made abundantly clear: **“Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”** Genesis 2:16,17

The sequel is recorded in the third chapter. The serpent is introduced, described simply as one of the *‘beasts of the field which the Lord God had made’*. He was no more and no less; there is no possible suggestion in the record that he was the *‘devil’* of popular theology. This reptile was endowed with the gift of speech and a **“subtilty”** or intelligence superior to the other creatures. He said to the woman: **“Yea, hath God said, Ye shall**

not eat of every tree of the garden?” Genesis 3:1. The woman's answer indicates that she fully understood the divine command; she replied: **“We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die”** Genesis 3:2,3.

The serpent then pronounced the first lie-**“Ye shall not surely die”**-a lie which has been perpetuated down the ages in the idea of the immortality of the soul. The serpent proceeded to tempt Eve by implying that if she partook of the forbidden fruit she would become like one of the angelic beings, knowing good and evil. Eve was tempted: she took of the fruit and ate, and gave to Adam, who ate also. This was sin-the transgression of God's law. The punishment followed as God said it would. God pronounced the edict:

“Unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; . . . in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return”. Genesis 3:17-19

Man was banished from the garden; his very nature was now sin-cursed and henceforward he would be subject to the ills of that nature; to toil, disease and finally death. In the scriptural phrase, he was now under **“the law of sin and death”**.

In commenting on this in his epistle to the Romans, Paul wrote: **“Wherefore, as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”**. Romans 5:12

All partake of Adam's sin-stricken nature; all mankind is subject to sin, disease and death. Death is not the gateway to a better life (or for that matter to a worse one); it is the complete cessation of life. A few scriptural testimonies will make this abundantly clear. David, in the Psalms, declared

“In death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?” Psalm 6.5 and again: **“Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish”** Psalm 146.3,4

Notice particularly from this quotation how David speaks of the **“thoughts”** perishing; no suggestion here of just the body perishing and a **“soul”** living on. David says emphatically that when man dies and **“returneth to his earth”** his thoughts also perish.

David's son, Solomon, speaks just as emphatically of the death state in the book of Ecclesiastes. He wrote:

“For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest”. Ecclesiastes 9:5,6&10

King Hezekiah, when told by the prophet Isaiah that he would die, fully understood what death meant and prayed to God that his life might be prolonged, which petition was granted. His prayer of thanksgiving contains these words concerning death:

“The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee, they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day”. Isaiah 38.18,19

There are many other such testimonies which could be adduced, but perhaps these will suffice to demonstrate the very clear Bible teaching concerning the state of the dead.

A MESSAGE OF HOPE

The Bible message concerning man and his destiny, however, does not end there. If it did, it would be a gloomy, hopeless message indeed. In that

146th Psalm, already quoted, David continued: **“Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God”**. Psalm 146.5 David speaks of **“hope”**, and his hope was the same as Paul's hope. David died and Peter states categorically that **“David is not ascended into the heavens”**. Acts 2.34 David's hope was in a bodily resurrection when he would awake from the sleep of death to everlasting life. In another Psalm he sang: **“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness”**. Psalm 17:15.

The Bible certainly speaks of an `after life', but it is not an `after life' of an immortal soul enjoying bliss in heaven. It is a life obtained by bodily resurrection and will be enjoyed on this earth. The Bible not only reveals why mankind is subject to sin, disease and death, but outlines also the means by which man can be saved from this situation. It reveals God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.

CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION

The Bible explains how Christ came as a sacrifice for sin and so opened up a way of salvation from sin, and death. The Lord Jesus Christ was of Adam's nature- **“in all points tempted like as we are”** Hebrews 4:15 but he was guiltless of actual transgressions; he was **“without sin”**. Being of sinful nature he had to die, but being sinless, by his death he conquered sin. And so on the third day God raised him from the dead **“because it was not possible that he should be holden of it”** Acts 2:24 and by his victory over sin and death he has made possible a way of escape for all mankind. All who believe in him and obey his commandments will likewise be the subjects of a bodily resurrection to eternal life to be enjoyed on this earth when Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God.

There is no doubt that Jesus rose bodily from the tomb. He revealed himself to his disciples and invited them to **“handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have”**. Only by his literal bodily presence were they convinced. This is resurrection - a literal bodily rising again to life.

CHRIST'S PROMISE TO RAISE THE DEAD AT HIS COMING

Jesus, during his ministry, spoke plainly indeed of the resurrection. Listen to his words:

“And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day”. John 6:39,40.

This was the hope of all who **“believed on him”**. It was Martha's hope, as is clearly indicated in the record of the raising of her brother Lazarus. **“Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again”**, to which Martha replied: **“I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day”**. Jesus answered her: **“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”** Martha confessed her firm belief: **“Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world”**. John 11.23-27

PAUL'S EXPOSITION OF THE RESURRECTION

The doctrine of the resurrection is set out in absolute clarity by Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians. In chapter 15 he summarises most succinctly the whole matter. In this chapter he argues, with his usual mastery, the basic necessity for resurrection. He was, in fact, contending with false teachers who, even at that time, had entered the early church and were questioning this very doctrine. They were Gentile converts who were attempting to introduce into true christianity the pagan idea of inherent immortality. Eventually such teachers were only too successful, as can be clearly seen from the travesty of Christianity taught in most churches today. In the early verses of the chapter, Paul establishes the incontrovertible fact that Christ rose from the dead, and then in verse 12 asks the question: **“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say**

some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

The resurrection of Christ himself was the basis of Paul's powerful argument. No Christian worthy of the name, could deny that Christ rose from the dead, and Christ's own resurrection proved the fact of resurrection. Paul develops his argument by contending that if the doctrine of the resurrection were denied, then that denial applied also to Christ's resurrection; and if Christ had not risen from the dead then the whole of Christianity was a falsehood; there was no salvation and all those who had died in the Christian hope had, in fact, perished for ever. This is the substance of Paul's argument in verses 13-19. He then brushes these false teachers aside with the exultant words **"but now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept (R.V. `are asleep')"** Notice how Paul in these verses describes those who have died in the Christian hope-**"are fallen asleep"** (v. 18) **"them that are asleep"** (v. 20). They are sleeping the deep sleep of death, completely unconscious until called from the dead at the resurrection.

Christ was the first to rise from the dead. He was, as Paul puts it, **"the firstfruits"**. The harvest will be the resurrection to life eternal of all those who believe and serve him faithfully. Paul tells us when this will be. He continues (v. 23) **"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming"**. At his second coming, Christ's first work will be to raise his sleeping servants. In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul comforts the believers there who had recently lost some of their number by death. He wrote exhorting them to **"sorrow not as others which have no hope"**, for **"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first"** 1 Thessalonians 4.13,16. This is the **"last day"** spoken of by Martha when she said concerning her brother **"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day"**.

WHO WILL BE RAISED?

Having then established from the scriptures the truth of the doctrine of the resurrection, the question must now be asked: *'Who will be raised?'* Will everyone who has ever lived on this earth since the days of Adam be raised from the dead at the return of Christ? The answer is a simple nega-

tive. The vast majority of mankind will not be the subjects of a resurrection. It is a knowledge and appreciation of **“the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ”** that makes a man responsible to future judgment. Those only who are thus responsible will be raised from the dead. In brief, light and understanding of the one true gospel of salvation constitute the ground of resurrectional responsibility.

By far the larger part of the countless men and women who have lived and died since the creation have been completely ignorant of God and his plan of salvation and are not related in any way to a resurrection at the return of Christ. Men and women in general live out their brief span of life as the flowers of the field or as the cattle upon a thousand hills. They eat and drink and are merry, or sad, as the case may be, and then they die. In them the **“law of sin and death”** works out in their lives, and when death overtakes them at the last they return to their earth to awake no more. David in the Psalms declared: **“Man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish”**, Psalm 49:20 and Solomon speaks in the same strain, **“For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yet, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again”**. Ecclesiastes 3:19,20.

Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, refers to the Gentiles in general as **“having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them”**; Ephesians 4:17,18 and earlier in the same letter he had reminded the believers that before their conversion they had been in a position of **“having no hope, and (being) without God in the world”**. Ephesians 2:12.

REWARD AND PUNISHMENT

It is surely clear from these few testimonies that only those who have a knowledge and understanding of the divine will and purpose will be raised from the dead at the coming of Christ. This does not mean, as we have seen, that all those who are raised will receive the reward of eternal life. Sad to say, some will not. All who have known God's will and are consequently responsible to divine law, are also responsible to divine judgment. If, following their knowledge of God, they have been obedient to his com-

mands, they will receive life eternal, but if not, they will receive the condemnation of eternal death. In the prophecy of Daniel it is written:

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and ever lasting contempt”. Daniel 12:2.

The Lord Jesus Christ declared

“The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”. John 5:28,29.

And Paul declared

“There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust”. Acts 24:15.

After resurrection, then, there follows judgment. All who are raised from the dead will have to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ. In the 25th chapter of Matthew's gospel record, Jesus gives a picture of the Judgment Seat, when he will separate the **“sheep”** from the **“goats”**, representing the righteous and the wicked. The sheep will be placed on his right hand side and goats on his left. To the righteous will be given eternal life, but the wicked the punishment of eternal death. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers:

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad”. 2 Corinthians 5:10.

And to the Romans

“We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ so then every one of us shall give account of himself to God”. Romans 14:10,12

To Timothy he wrote

“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom”.

2 Timothy 4:1.

Finally, Jesus himself in his last message in the Book of Revelation, declared

“Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be”. Revelation 22:12

Those whose works will be accounted unrighteous will be rejected at the Judgment Seat and be turned away by Christ. No protestations of having been his servants will be of any avail. In the 'sermon on the mount' Jesus declared:

“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”. Matthew 7:21-13.

This departure will be a departure to the finality of an eternal grave. The destiny of all the wicked is complete and utter extinction. The following scriptural quotations will suffice to establish this fact. Firstly, David in the Psalms:

“But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away”. Psalm 37:20.

“Wait on the Lord, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together; the end of the wicked shall be cut off”. Psalm 37:34,38.

“The Lord preserveth all them that love him; but all the wicked will he destroy”. Psalm 145:20.

Solomon in the Proverbs declared:

“Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded”. Proverbs 13:13.

Paul, referring to those who depart from the faith, wrote to the Thessalonians:

“Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe” 2 Thessalonians 1:9,10.

And lastly Peter, speaking of the same class, wrote:

“But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed . . . shall utterly perish in their own corruption” 2 Peter 2:12.

In happy contrast, the reward of the righteous will be eternal life. To the sheep on his right hand, Jesus says: **“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”** Matthew 25:34.

“The wages of sin” wrote Paul **“is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”**. Romans 6:23 This **“eternal life”** will not be enjoyed in the disease-stricken body we now possess. These **“vile”** bodies, as Paul terms them, will be changed. In writing to the Philippians he says that Christ will **“change our vile body (R.V. 'body of humiliation') that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body”**. Philippians 3:21 What sort of body is Christ's **“glorious”** body? When Jesus first rose from the dead, he emerged as he entered-a human body. When met by Mary he remonstrated with her as she moved towards him to take hold of him-**“Touch me not (R.S.V. 'Do not hold me') for I am not yet ascended to my Father”** John 20:17 He had not yet **“ascended”** or been elevated to his Father's divine nature. He was still defiled by the grave and forbade Mary to hold him.

Later on the same day, however, when he revealed himself to his disciples, he invited them to **“handle me and see”** Luke 24:39.

During the time which had elapsed between his being seen by Mary and his appearance to his disciples he had been subject to a change. His 'vile' human body-truly 'the body of his humiliation'-had been elevated to a spiritual body. What is the essential difference? His following words to his disciples are particularly instructive in this connection. He continued, **“for a spirit (apparition) hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have”** Luke 24:39 Notice he describes his body as **“flesh and bones”**. not **“flesh and blood”**. A normal human body is energised by blood which is pumped round the body by the heart. When the heart ceases to pump the blood, the man immediately dies. **“The life of the flesh is in the blood”**, Leviticus 17.11 declared God to Moses, and for this reason Israel under the Law of Moses were forbidden to eat flesh with the blood, an ordinance which orthodox Jews still observe in their eating of kosher meat.

The body which Jesus possessed after his resurrection and elevation to divine nature was not a **“flesh and blood”** body, a body energised by blood, but a body of **“flesh and bones”** energised directly by the spirit of God, and thus incorruptible. Once again, Paul explains this most clearly in the 15th chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, to which reference has already been made. Continuing his argument, he meets the objection concerning what form the resurrected body takes: **“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?”** (v. 35). Paul then explains the difference between the 'natural' and the 'spiritual' body. The first is, **“weak”**, **“corruptible”**, and **“earthy”**, the second is **“powerful”**, **“incorruptible”**, and **“heavenly”** (v. 42-49). It is interesting to note in v. 45 that in describing the **“natural body”** he refers back to the Genesis record and quotes the words to which reference has already been made; he writes **“And so it is written The first man Adam was made a living soul”**, or **“natural body”**.

This reference by Paul confirms completely that the term *living soul* has no connotations of immortality, in fact just the reverse; it means simply a natural, human, blood-energised body. And so Paul continues (v. 50) **“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption”**. In other words, a **“flesh and blood”** body is corruptible and needs to be changed into an incorruptible spirit-energised body. Then follow those inspiring words,

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 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”.

This reward of eternal life will be enjoyed on this earth, not in heaven. Heaven is never spoken of in scripture as the place of reward. The Lord Jesus Christ is to return to this earth to establish the kingdom of God. In what is termed 'The Lord's prayer' Jesus taught his disciples to pray **“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven”.**

Matthew 6:10.

This prayer has been repeated down the ages by countless professing Christians, yet how few have really understood the true meaning of the words!

The kingdom referred to by Christ is that glorious age to come when Christ himself shall sit upon David's throne in Jerusalem and rule over the whole world in peace and righteousness; a time when the divine will shall at last be done on this earth. When the angel Gabriel was sent from God to the virgin Mary to announce that she would be the mother of Jesus, he declared of the holy child to be born: **“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end”.**

Luke 1:32,33.

The reward of the righteous will be to share the rulership of the kingdom with Christ-as kings and priests. There are numerous references in scripture which establish beyond doubt that the reward of the righteous will be enjoyed on this earth in the kingdom of God. David in the Psalms wrote: **“But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace”** Psalm 37:11 Jesus cites this verse in the beatitudes: **“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”.**

Matthew 5:5.

The prophet Daniel was shown a vision of the destruction of the kingdoms of men and the establishment of the kingdom of God, and the vision concluded with the words

“And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an ever lasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him”. Daniel 7:27.

And finally, in the book of Revelation is portrayed the glorious picture of the redeemed:

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth” Revelation 5:9,10.

THE PERSONAL QUESTION

One question remains. It is a most important one. It is the personal one. How can one, personally, become associated with this **“life”** promised in the scriptures? The answer is simple. It is by belief and baptism. Before he ascended into heaven, Jesus commanded his disciples: **“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”.** Mark 16.15,16.

Firstly there must be a belief of the Gospel, or as it is elsewhere termed in scripture **“the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ”.** Acts 8:12 This belief must then be followed by baptism. By baptism one becomes associated with, or **“in”** Christ, and thus related to a future life

“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”. I Corinthians 15:21,22.

All mankind is **“in Adam”** by nature; not all are **“in Christ”**. One has to become **“in Christ”** and that is accomplished by baptism into his name. In writing to the Galatians, Paul puts it very clearly: he says to the believers there:

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”. Galatians 3:26-28.

In his Epistle to the Romans he likens baptism to burial and resurrection. He writes, **“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”**. 56 Romans 6:3,4 This simile, incidentally, makes it very evident that true baptism is complete immersion-a burial-in water, not infant sprinkling, as erroneously practised by so many churches. Baptism is a 'burial' with Christ and a **“rising again”** to a new life in him, and by this means one becomes associated with the hope of resurrection and eternal life made possible by his death. And so Paul continues:

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him”. Romans 6:5,8,9.

And he concludes,

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”. Romans 6:22,23.

“Of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question” said Paul as he stood before the Council of the Jewish elders. About ten

years later he testified once again of his hope; he wrote to Timothy just before his death:

“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”.

2 Timothy 4:7,8.

The Apostle's work was done. In A.D. 68 he died a martyr's death. He died in sure and certain hope of resurrection. He **“fell asleep”** in Jesus but he will soon now awake. He, with the sleeping saints of all ages, will be called from the sleep of death. His reward is certain. He will be given that **“crown of righteousness”** - the glorious reward of eternal life in the kingdom of God. The same reward is promised to all **“who love his appearing”**, to all who believe the same things and who have the same confident hope. **“The hope of the resurrection of the dead”** is the true Christian hope. It is the hope which Christ, by his death, made possible; which, by his resurrection, he made certain; and which, at his return, will most surely be realised.