

## A Message of Hope

Man is forever consulting prophets, soothsayers, astrologists and even witch doctors, seeking a prediction that will bring hope for the future. What is man without hope? Hope drives man to dream, work and even revolutions. The Marxist believes in the possibility of a classless society just around the corner. He is willing and ready to spend all his energy and even give his life for the Marxist paradise on earth.

Hope drives on life! Yet we all know that death is man's common enemy. The poor as well as the rich, all will meet the same fate. Death is the great leveler. The poor die unknown. They may not even have a pauper's grave. The rich have massive, elaborate and even luxurious mausoleums. The famous have their name in history books. But dead is dead.

How do we react to death? Frightened? Brooding faces staring at the corpse in the coffin? Wailing at the grave side? Banish the thought of death from the mind? Is there hope? But what is hope if death is the total end of life? What will happen when we die? Is the world a hemmed – in place – without a beyond? Are we creatures of time without a meaningful future?

Yes, there is hope! Life is more than waiting for death. Christ has risen from the dead and all who believe in Him shall be raised with Him on the last day! Jesus Christ is the one who shouts out with full force: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink... (and) from within him there shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38) Jesus always spoke about life. He is the Lord of life. "In Him was life," the apostle John says, "and the life was the light of men." (John 1:4). Jesus has come to give us life in the right here and now. He has said: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." (John 11:25) This message of Jesus is **truly revolutionary**. We are going to have a perfect society, but not here in this world.

A Christian has a wonderful destiny he is on the way to the new heaven and earth! Life has purpose. The Christian is a pilgrim. He is headed for God. Life may be tough. But God has never promised His people smooth sailing, but He does guarantee a safe arrival in His eternal harbour. This knowledge makes life here rich, despite all the problems we may have to face. A Christian is not restricted to this world and neither is his labour. The work done for the Lord does have eternal value. Therefore, the apostle Paul could say: "My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." And in the book of Revelation we read this wonderful promise: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them." (Rev. 14:13).

The thought of eternity has made man hope-filled and courageous. The church father Ignatius of Antioch wrote that he wished to be chewed up by lions in order to become the pure bread fit for eternal living. Polycarp, who was martyred as an old man, was

amused at his interrogation in the amphitheater of Smyrna when they tried to reason with him on the basis of the value of keeping his life here on earth. Polycarp's reply was a bold confession of faith. He said that he was looking forward to the reunion with Christ at the right hand of God.

Augustine pointed out the same fact when he said that this life here on earth is but a preparation for the life to come. He reminded us of our Lord's startling comparison of the sower and the seed, of the good which will eventually come to final fruition, through the ups and downs of this life. "Then the just will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear," said Jesus as He finished expounding His parable. (Matt. 13:43)

Thank God for the promise of eternal life. But the text that has this promise of life also contains a very sobering thought: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:36)

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