

## **Our Heavenly Hope.**

### **No Twenty-six**

"When I die, I rot," said the atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell. This is true of course. All of us have to die some day. Death makes no exceptions. Death is feared. The Bible calls it "the king of terrors"(Job 18: 14). The question of death has occupied the minds of men and women since Adam and Eve were driven from paradise. Even in our secular age many still ask, "If there is a life after death, what will it be like?" And they express a fear of the great unknown beyond the grave. The Anglo-Irish poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) caught this feeling precisely:

Nor dread nor hope attend  
A dying animal.  
A man awaits his end,  
Dreading and hoping all.

What hope can we offer? On the one hand, the sects, cults and the New Age movement have their answers, ranging from spending eternity on a planet somewhere in outer space to reincarnation. On the other hand, there is a widespread belief that in the end nothing matters; we came from nothing and we go to nothing. But if God does not exist you cannot make sense out of life. No wonder so many in our generation have become cynical and are prone to follow anyone who can offer hope. A young German testified: "I believed in Hitler and national-socialism. Hitler is dead and national-socialism is defeated. You have taken away my faith. Give me a new faith. I cannot do without it." A cry of despair! But we can offer hope. What can we say at the grave side? "The king of terror" has been defeated by Jesus Christ. The Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, came back from the grave to show that death does not have the last word. Because of His resurrection all who are linked to Him by faith will experience death as the gateway to a new quality of life. But what if a man has no link with the Risen Lord? What hope is there for him? We cannot talk anyone into heaven. A man without the Lord will not stand a chance. Jesus turned His back to people who turned their backs to Him. He said, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come"(John 8:21). But for the twice-born, death is their ascension day to heaven. When we believe in the Risen Lord, we have life in a culture of death, hope in a despairing world. If this hope controls our life, we may not act if hardship and sorrow, persecution and scorn, sickness and death are the only realities. Our future is guaranteed by our Lord. We have heavenly hope. Some day we will enter into the joy of our Lord where "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain"( Rev.21: 4).