

“The Hope of the Resurrection”  
(Acts 24:15)

Introduction: When I was a student in seminary, I met a man with a unique view of the second coming of Christ and the resurrection. He believed that all of Matthew 24 and the whole book of Revelation referred to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Now this is not so unique by itself. Perhaps some of you hold to this view. But what made his view so unique was the fact that he believed that all of it had taken place, including the Second Coming of Christ, the rapture of all living Christians, the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment. He believed that all of prophesy had already been fulfilled. When I asked him what is next for us and for this world, he replied, “Life will go on as it now is. These are the New Heavens and the New Earth. When a Christian dies, his soul will go to heaven. When a wicked man dies, he will go to hell. But there will be no more resurrections.” But now I find that his view is not so unique but is spreading. This past week a fellow minister in the RCUS called me and asked for anything I might know about the subject. He said that the doctrine is beginning to affect his congregation. So he is seeking to refute it before it causes any to run shipwreck with regard to their faith, as Paul warned Timothy, “And their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, *men* who have gone astray from the truth saying that the resurrection has already taken place, and thus they upset the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:17-18). That which makes it so dangerous is that it denies a fundamental doctrine of Scripture, that there is a future resurrection for all who trust in Christ.

In Paul’s day there was a great dispute on the subject as well between the two groups known as the Pharisees and the Sadducees, though not quite the same as the one I have just described. When Paul was arrested, he was brought by the Roman commander to stand before his accusers. In Acts 23:6-10, we read, “But perceiving that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul *began* crying out in the Council, ‘Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!’ And as he said this, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. And there arose a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and *began* to argue heatedly, saying, ‘We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?’ And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.” The Pharisees acknowledged spiritual beings, the afterlife and the resurrection. The Sadducees were the liberals of the day. They denied them all. But notice here, and in our text this evening as Paul makes his defense before governor Felix, it is the resurrection which is our hope. As Paul argues in 1 Corinthians 15, if there is no resurrection, then Christ has not been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then there is no hope for the Christian; we are still in our sins, and those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If Christ has not been raised then there is no Gospel to preach. It is through His death and resurrection that we are saved. He died in our place on the cross. But He also rose again for our justification. If there is no resurrection, there is no justification. But on the other hand, if Christ has been raised, then we who are united to Him by faith will also be raised. It is inevitable. But if there are some today who are teaching

that there is no future resurrection for all believers, then they are in gross error, and do not teach the truth as it is in Christ.

What I would like you to see from this text this evening is that,

*The resurrection is the hope of the Christian.*

## **I. First, I Want You to See That the Resurrection Is the Hope of the Christian.**

### **A. That Is What Paul Calls It in Our Text This Evening.**

1. He says that he has a hope in God, “that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”
2. But this was not only his hope, but it was that of the Pharisees too, “a hope . . . which these men cherish themselves.”
3. Hope, in this case, is something good that is expected and awaited. It is not a hope so kind of hope, but rather a settled assurance that something is yet to take place that will take place. If it was already here, then it would no longer be hoped for, as Paul says in Romans 8:24, “Hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees?”
4. We do not yet see the resurrection and restoration of all things, and because of this we hope for it.

### **B. And It Is This which Is the Special Hope of All Christians.**

1. We see that it was the hope of the OT saints, as far back as Job. Job responded to his accusers, when he was afflicted in the righteous Providence of God, “And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25-26). He knew that his body would be resurrected when at the last His Redeemer stood on the earth. And that is the reason why the saints of God hope for the resurrection.
2. Paul said to King Agrippa, “And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; *the promise* to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve *God* night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews. Why is it considered incredible among you *people* if God does raise from the dead?” (Acts 26:6-8).
3. Paul himself sought after the blessing of being a part of that resurrection. He strove with all of his might that he might attain to it. In Philippians 3, he writes, “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (vv. 7-11).
4. Paul wanted to be a part of that resurrection. And he knew that the only way that he could attain to it was through Christ. He must not trust in his own works, not in his own righteousness, but that righteousness which comes through faith in Christ Jesus.

5. He sought to know Him intimately. He sought to have the marks of His ownership in fellowshiping in His power and in His sufferings. He knew that he had to carry the cross if he was to wear the crown. But he also knew that the Lord would give him the grace to carry it.
6. But all these things he did to attain to that resurrection. To gain that was to gain everything, mainly, everlasting fellowship with the Lord in heavenly bliss.
7. But notice what Paul's attitude was. Not that of most Christians today. Not that he was already safe, so that he might now sit back on his laurels and enjoy the ride to heaven. He says, "Not that I have already obtained *it*, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of *it* yet; but one thing *I do*: forgetting what *lies* behind and reaching forward to what *lies* ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (vv. 12-14).
8. He presses on, he strives forward to lay hold of that prize. He runs as one who knows that all run, but only one will receive the trophy. He runs in the same way as the one who expects to win.
9. And was this zeal expected of Paul alone? No. It is expected of all of us. He continues, "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same *standard* to which we have attained" (vv. 15-16).
10. We must all strive to attain to that resurrection. That is the hope that we are all to be reaching out for. And Paul says that if it is not, then God will reveal that to us.

## II. And that Brings Us to the Second Point, Why Is the Resurrection the Hope of the Christian? We Have Seen That It Is, but Why Is It?

- A. First, and perhaps the Most Obvious, If We Miss Out on The Resurrection, We Miss Out on All Hope of Everlasting Life.
  1. One thing is certain, there is a resurrection for all men. Our text this evening bears this out. "There shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous."
  2. The hope that Paul and all of the saints seek to attain to is not the resurrection in general, but the resurrection of the righteous.
    - a. I believe that the Bible clearly speaks of only one resurrection in which all of the dead will be raised.
    - b. Jesus said in John 5:28-29, "Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good *deeds* to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* to a resurrection of judgment."
    - c. This is certainly the clearest passage of Scripture in all of the Bible as to how many resurrection there will be.
    - d. Some teach that there are two resurrections, and some teach as many as four.
    - e. But Jesus says that there is *an hour* coming in which *all* who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth, both to different destinations.
    - f. The Bible again and again refers to the Resurrection as "the" resurrection, showing that there is only one (cf. Matt. 22:28, 30, 31; John 11:24, etc.). It could not be "the" resurrection, but only "a" resurrection, if there were several. You would have

to distinguish which one you were talking about.

- g. But it is also certain from the passage I just read in John, as well as the Sheep and Goat judgment in Matthew 25, and the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20, that there is also only one judgment in which all the sheep are acquitted and enter into eternal glory, and all of the goats are condemned and enter into eternally punishment.
- h. Jesus says that they are raised to two judgments. In Matthew 25, all of the nations are gathered and separated and judged. In Revelation 20, all of the dead stand before God and are judged. Those whose names are not found written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire.
- i. The point being then, if all are going to be raised to judgment, which group do you want to be in: the righteous or the wicked? I hope the righteous. To miss out on this is to miss out on everything.
- j. And the only way to attain to this is by trusting in Christ's righteousness and then striving with all your might to serve Him.

B. The Second Reason the Resurrection Is the Hope of the Christian Is that at the Resurrection, Death Will Be Forever Vanquished.

- 1. Paul writes, "But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, 'DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. 55 "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?'" (1 Cor. 15:54-55).
- 2. There will be no more death, no more dying, no more separation from loved ones who die in the Lord. But we will forever be with the saints and with the Lord.

C. Third, All Things Will Be Restored to Their Pristine Purity.

- 1. Paul writes in Romans 8, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one also hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it" (vv. 18-25).
- 2. When the resurrection takes place, the revealing of the sons of God, when our bodies are redeemed, at the same time the Creation will be set free from its corruption. There will be no more earthquakes and tidelwaves. There will be no more blight and disease on plants. There will be no more wild beast that kill on all of God's holy mountain.
- 3. There will be the New Heavens and the New Earth wherein righteousness dwells.

D. And of Course, Fourth, the Effects of the Curse Will Forever Be Removed from Us as Well.

1. As we have just read from Romans 8, we will have received the adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.
  2. This means that the curse will be removed. There will be no more sickness, weakness, old age or death.
  3. There will no longer be the unnatural separation between the soul and the body. God make us to be both a material and immaterial being. Death is unnatural. It tears apart what God has put together.
  4. At the resurrection, both will be joined. Christ will bring with him those who have fallen asleep in Him, and they will be met by their bodies as they are raised from the dead and transformed into His glorious image, having been made fit to dwell with the Lord forever in glory.
  5. The wicked, on the other hand will also be raised and reunited with their bodies. Their bodies will also be fitted for them for the torment that they must endure for the rest of time.
- E. And Last, and Most Importantly, the Resurrection of the Righteous Is the Hope of the Saint, for to Attain to It Is to Be Forever With Christ.
1. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4, “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thes. 4:16-18).
  2. Jesus said to those who followed Him, “Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. And you know the way where I am going” (John 14:1-4).
  3. To attain to that resurrection is, as Paul said, very much better, because it is to depart and to be with Christ. And to be with Him is the very best thing that any Christian could ever imagine.
  4. And of course you know the way. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (v. 6).
- F. Now Those Who Hold to the Error I Described at the Beginning Might Object.
1. “I believe that a person will still be redeemed and go to be with the Lord. My position does not deny that!”
  2. But look at what he denies.
    - a. Death is not vanquished, for the dead bodies of the saints are still in their tombs, and will remain there forever and ever, being unnaturally separated from their souls in heaven. And since there has already been a resurrection and a rapture, then some of the saints will have their resurrected bodies and others not.
    - b. The Creation is not redeemed, it also remains groaning under the curse for the rest of time.
    - c. And the battle with Satan and his hosts, the fight between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light will go on forever and ever. There will be no final victory or end to the war. The curse goes on. There is no reconciling of all things, on earth

or in heaven, to Himself (Col. 1:20).

- d. If they want to argue that the devil and his hosts are already vanquished and in the lake of fire, then they would still have to acknowledge the kingdom of darkness which exists due to the evil in the hearts of men. There is currently a battle raging in the world. If they do not see this, then they are blind.
- e. People of God, our hope is the resurrection from the dead. I hope that these words will have done two things for you this evening. First, that you understand that there is yet a resurrection that you should hope for. And second, that you should do everything that you can to attain to it.
- f. May God give us the grace and strength to strive forward with all of our might, relying solely on Christ, that we might reach that goal and not fall short. Amen.