

THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL TODAY

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Chris Katulka, What is Your Hope? Part 1

One of my favorite questions to ask Christians is: What's Your Hope as a Believer in Jesus?

When you begin to think about what the Scriptures say your hope in Christ is what comes to your mind?

Now, as long as I've been asking that question I have to admit, I never get a wrong answer. Every answer I get is correct, and valid and Biblical, BUT it's usually not the specific answer I'm looking for.

The answers I often get are, "My hope is to spend eternity in heaven with Jesus." or "My sins are forgive forever!" And my response is, you're right. But that's not exactly what I'm looking for.

People! Are you tired of guessing?

All Christians share a common hope that is actually rooted in our Scriptures and orthodox tradition as Christians, back to the early church, which is pointed out in the Nicene Creed as early as 381

AD, which states that, “we believe... in the resurrection of the dead.”

Now that’s the answer I’m looking for when I ask a committed Christian what his or her hope is in Christ... it’s the resurrection!

That there is a day coming when the dead will rise from the grave. That there is a day coming when you and I will go from mortal to immortal, corruptible to incorruptible. That the exact same thing that happened to Jesus when He resurrected from the dead will happen to us... that’s the ultimate hope of a Christian.

Listen to what CS Lewis says about the resurrection, “To preach Christianity meant (to the Apostles) primarily to preach the Resurrection. ... The Resurrection is the central theme in every Christian sermon reported in the Acts. The Resurrection, and its consequences, were the 'gospel' or good news which the Christians brought.” Why was it so important for the Apostles to preach the resurrection... well the Apostles were Jewish men and the resurrection is deeply rooted in the Jewish faith. In fact, the famous codifier of Jewish law Rabbi Moshe Ben Maimon... also known as Rambam... wrote down 13 principles for what it means to be Jewish... the 13th principle is that you must believe in the Resurrection of the Dead.

I believe it's important to understand that Jesus didn't invent resurrection at the end of the gospels, this wasn't something He and the Father came up with on the fly after He died. The concept of resurrection can be found in various places in the Bible, but its origins lie in the Old Testament and the overall theology of how God created mankind.

Before I start showing you specific verses that reveal the resurrection in the Old Testament, I want you to think about this concept... try to get your mind wrapped around this... you and I have been designed to live eternally... forever, not in spirit only, but in our flesh. The idea of death was not the creator God's intention for His creation. Go back to Genesis when God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden, He didn't create them to die... He created them to live forever! Death and dying didn't come until after man disobeyed God, when spiritual death separated man from the sustainer of life... God Himself.

The overarching idea that death was never apart of God's plan helps to put into perspective the idea and theology of resurrection and gives us a fuller understanding of God's plan of redemption.

Resurrection in the Old Testament can be boiled down to one verse that communicates the truth about resurrection and the hope it provides for all God-fearing believers throughout the ages. That

verse comes from the book of Job. Job was a man who in human understanding would be considered a very blessed man. He had great wealth, good health, and a beautiful family, but all of that was taken from him without warning. He lost his riches, his health was failing, and his family was taken from him. Job was a man who lost everything, but understood something deeply about God and His promises... Job said this in Job 19:25-27, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and he shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Here... in what some believe is one of the oldest books of the Old Testament... Job believes and fully understands that despite his emotional and physical pain, he will one day see His redeemer in his flesh... that even though Satan has tempted and tried him and almost literally beaten him to a pulp, that one day in his flesh he will see true justice enacted for his suffering, that in his flesh he will be vindicated by God.

And remember what Job says... “and after my skin is destroyed”. Job is admitting that he expects to die, and he knows his end is imminent, he knows that he will return to the dust, but that there is a day coming when his Redeemer will stand on the earth and it's at that moment He will see God.

You see, resurrection is connected deeply to vindication and justice. Here is what I mean... at some point everything that was marred by sin, every act of injustice, unjustness, and sin must be dealt with, it must be judged by God.

The Apostle Paul in 1 Cor 15 uses a very Jewish term to describe the resurrection of Jesus... he says Jesus' resurrection was the "firstfruits"... in the ancient Jewish world during a harvest the priests would go down and cut a handful of the harvest and carry it back to the temple to offer it to the Lord, as a way to give thanks for the full harvest that coming.

And think about this! Remember I said resurrection is vindication! The idea that all things will be made right, and truth will be brought to the surface. Jesus' resurrection is also His vindication. Jesus lived a sinless life, he lived a perfect life, he performed miracles of healing, He silenced storms, and He even raised the dead. Yet, for many His miracles weren't enough to make them see He is the Messiah as was promised in the Old Testament. So imagine if Jesus died, and didn't resurrect... everything he did to prove He was the Messiah would have been a waste... all of His teaching would be relegated to wise teachings from rabbis of old.

But that's not what happened... Jesus was vindicated! His words and His works were considered true, why? Because the Father raised Him from the dead. The Father took Jesus' lifeless body and called Him out of the grave to make known the truth of who He is! That despite what Jesus' naysayers believed, they were wrong... the Father chose Jesus to be the King of Israel, the Savior of the world, and Jesus' resurrection is proof.

The same can be said of us. For those who face Christian persecution today for your faith in Jesus... there is vindication at the resurrection. For those of you who are constantly sharing your faith in a lost and broken world... there is vindication at the resurrection, for those of you who have lost a loved one or feel empty, alone, hopeless... there is hope in the resurrection. Don't forget Job, he was broken, he was empty, he was alone, and yet he knew that in His flesh He would see God!