



THE HOPE OF MANKIND

AS REVEALED BY GOD

IN HIS HOLY WORD THE BIBLE

by Harry Shallcross

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As revealed by God in His Holy Word the Bible

"The earth abideth for ever" Ecclesiastes 1:4

Introduction

There are many ideas in the world as to what happens to you when you die. Various cultures have in their heritage a concept of a place for the dead. The natives of North America believe that on death they go to 'the happy hunting ground in the sky', those in Australia also have a place of 'dreaming', many Asian cultures believe in a re-incarnation: that is, after death you come back in some other life form depending on how you have conducted yourself in this life.

Even among Christians there is more than one concept. Some believe that on death, those that are 'Good' become spirit beings and go to live with God in heaven, while those that are 'Bad' go to a place of torment in 'Hell'. Others believe that we go to a place where we are assessed before our ultimate destination is determined.

What is the truth regarding the state of the dead?

Let us see what the Bible has to say on the subject.

We are told in Genesis that Adam, because of sin, incurred the penalty of death and forfeited the right to live in Eden, a garden specially prepared by God for the human race to live in peace and tranquillity. But God forced Adam out of Eden, and placed a curse on the ground. Adam would have to toil for his food and shelter.

"Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." (Genesis 3:23,24).

Let us consider the condition of Death.

The major problems for correctly understanding the Scriptures come from that great lie that Satan told to Eve. **You shall not die.** Satan presented the lie in a plausible manner when he couched it with some truth; *“knowing good and evil”*.

But God had said ***“for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”*** (Genesis 2:17).

So we see that Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s commandment, and the death sentence was invoked. However, God did not strike them down dead immediately; death was and continues to be a dying process. The day that God decreed in which Adam would die was his lifetime - a period we have recorded as 930 years. This is also in accordance with the statement that with God a day is as a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8).

To understand the state of the dead we must first be aware of what the state of not being dead is - that is, **the state of living**.

When God created Adam we read as follows:

“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).

We see that Adam had the breath of life breathed into him and he became a living soul. It is important to note that the breath, the life and the body all combined to become a living soul.

The fallacy that the soul is separate from the body and lives forever is another lie that Satan has propagated. We have many references to show that when you die you cease to exist.

“The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:20).

“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 9:10).

You may ask - What about the following passage?

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

The word spirit here refers to the life force that God breathed into Adam, and on death that life force returns to God. The person is dead, but God has the power over that life force and is able to resurrect us again to life. This He has promised to do in the Kingdom to come (John 5:28,29).

So we see that **in death** there is no work or knowledge; **we cease to exist.**

Did God leave Adam and Eve without hope after the fall?

Although God carried out the punishment decreed and banished man from the Garden of Eden, He gave a promise to Eve that at some time in the future one of her descendants would come to rectify the situation that man is in because of sin.

“And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:14-15).

And later this promise was confirmed to many faithful people down through the ages.

God continued to have dealings with mankind after the fall. First He dealt directly with individuals, such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses.

To Abraham, because of his faith, God gave this promise: ***“And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.*** (Genesis 22:18).

This was confirmed by the Apostle Paul; *“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ “* (Galatians 3:16).

The Children of Israel

Following the deliverance of Jacob's descendants from slavery in Egypt, God entered into a special relationship with them. This involved the people agreeing to enter into a Covenant with God, which they freely accepted.

“Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey.” (Exodus 24:7);

and *“You shall do my ordinances and keep my statutes and walk in them. I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes and my ordinances, by doing which a man shall live: I am the LORD”* (Leviticus 18:4,5; RSV).

But the Law Covenant could not bring Deliverance from Death.

We are all aware that for fallen mankind this Law was impossible to keep. So why did God impose such a Law on the people?

The apostle Paul explains why.

“Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:24-26).

For God to implement His plan for the redemption of mankind He put in place the way in which the promise to Abraham would be fulfilled. Jesus Christ was the seed promised. The way to redemption is through faith, not by works, as it was proven through the Nation of Israel. Fallen man could not keep a perfect Law.

God's Plan from Creation.

Jesus Christ came to earth as a human being and lived a blameless life and so was able to offer to God the perfect sacrifice to correspond with Adam before he sinned against God.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

Jesus Christ's death on the cross, as a perfect human being, and His shed blood, satisfied all God's requirements for the redemption of all the human race.

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. 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” (1 Corinthians 15:20-22).

The New Covenant was ratified with the blood of Jesus Christ at his death on the cross, and confirmed as acceptable to God by His resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The New Covenant

The New Covenant is a gracious agreement made by the Lord God. It is the only arrangement that can take away sin and enable believers in Jesus Christ to have righteousness imputed to them, that is, they may be considered by God as righteous because of their faith (Hebrews 7:22, 8:7-13, 9:14,15,22).

Jesus spoke clearly and specifically of the New Covenant at the last supper (Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19,20).

Who is under the New Covenant?

The New Covenant is now available to all people on an individual basis, they only have to have faith and believe the Gospel message.

As previously mentioned, it came into effect at the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are blessed to have this understanding as we now have a Mediator with our Heavenly Father; . ***“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”*** (1 Timothy 2:5).

And again it is confirmed by the Apostle Paul; ***“Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God”*** (Hebrews 10:9-12).

What a wonderful prospect that our Heavenly Father has set before those who understand and believe the Gospel message. The New Covenant is now in operation and all our sins are covered by the Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. And there is an offer for us to be part of the blessing of all people in the Kingdom to come.

What does it mean to be under the New Covenant?

To be under a covenant means to be bound by its terms and conditions. Under the old Law Covenant there were many laws and rituals to keep, and to fail in one meant that you had broken the whole Law. However, the New Covenant embodies the royal law of love (James 2:8). The only commandments that Jesus Christ gave to us were that we should remember His sacrifice by observing the Lord's Supper as a memorial to Him, that we should show our acceptance of Him as our Saviour by baptism, that is by immersion in water, and that we should love God and each other. It is a Covenant of faith and love, not works.

Before we can come to make the decision to follow our Lord Jesus Christ we have to be fully aware of what the Gospel message is.

We have to learn of the love of God and Jesus Christ and demonstrate that love in our lives. The Gospel message is one of love and peace, not war and hatred. This was shown by Jesus in these words.

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34)

The Offer of Joint Heirship with Jesus Christ.

The Nation of Israel did not realise that they had the opportunity to gain this special position, but they rejected the Messiah, and now the offer has been made available to all people.

“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:46-48).

Now part of God's plan was to have a priestly class to assist in the work of bringing all people to an understanding of the Gospel message. It was not that His Heavenly Kingdom was to be set up during the present Gospel Age, but rather this was a time in which He would prepare some believing people for that work in the Kingdom (Acts 15:14-17).

This is the offer that is misunderstood by many Christians. These people are the only ones that are promised to see Jesus in heaven.

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:2,3
These are ***“the little flock”*** Christ mentioned in Luke 12:32 who will assist Him in the blessing of all nations.

The Present Conditions on Earth

We all know the conditions that exist on the earth. There are wars and conflicts of all kinds, also there are earthquakes, floods and famines.

These are the conditions on earth that God imposed as part of the punishment on Adam because of sin and when He drove him out of the garden of Eden.

“And 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; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; 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).

God, at the beginning, was pleased with His creation.

“And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

He has also decreed that although man may die, the earth would not be destroyed, but would continue for ever.

“One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever” (Ecclesiastes 1:4).

“The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men” (Psalm 115:16).

However, God has promised that this current condition will not be allowed to continue for ever. As Peter proclaimed there would be a restitution of all things.

“And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:20,21).

What is the Prospect for Mankind?

God has promised that people will be brought back, as human beings, to a world restored to the glory that existed in the garden of Eden.

What a wonderful prospect for the human race!

“And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:5-9).

The earth will be a place of peace and harmony as was prophesied so long ago.

“And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isaiah 2:4,5).

The Kingdom of God will be established on earth with a righteous government. God will banish sin and suffering forever.

All people will learn of the love of Our Heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ and will, in turn, come to love Them.

It will be the time that Jesus taught us to pray for:

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth.”

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