

Restoration of the Kingdom of God – 6

The hope which Paul and the other apostles proclaimed was focussed on the resurrection at the return of Jesus Christ. Paul told the believers in Colosse that his desire was to -

- **Colossians 1:22** "...present you holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight - **23** if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are **not moved away** from the **hope of the gospel which you heard...**"
- Unfortunately many have been "moved away" from the original gospel in which the role of Jesus Christ is to make possible the eternal inheritance of the earth by Abraham and those who have embraced his hope - **Matthew 5:5; Luke 13:28-29.**

They have misconstrued the words of Paul in **2 Corinthians 5:1-8** "*Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, **an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands... We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.***"

- Does this mean that the apostle Paul expected, immediately after he died, to enter into the presence of the Lord Jesus? Does it therefore mean that all the faithful go to heaven when they die? This cannot be true, when Paul expresses his confident hope a few verses back in -

2 Corinthians 4:14, "*Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus **shall raise up us** also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.*"

- For Paul **the resurrection is the only hope** for anyone who has died.

Back in his first letter Paul gave a careful explanation about life after death. This was because some among the Corinthians, under the influence of **Greek philosophy**, had **denied the resurrection**. Paul began by asking,

- "*How can some of you say that there is **no resurrection of the dead?***" - **1 Corinthians 15:12.** This would make sense if mankind possessed an immortal soul, because there would be no need for resurrection. Paul shows that they are wrong, by showing what happened to Jesus. Jesus died on the cross. How then was Jesus found to be alive on the third day? Did Jesus appear as a ghost to the apostles? No! He said to them, "*Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones [a body], **as you see I have***" - **Luke 24:39.** Paul comments, "***If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins... Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished -1 Cor. 15:13-14, 18.***"

If there is no resurrection, there is no other hope of life after death. There is no travelling of immaterial "souls" or "spirits" from one place to another, as the pagan Greeks and others believed.

- Paul was expecting to live again **at the Resurrection**, and in no other way. That is why he asks in **verse 32**, "*what have I gained if the dead are not raised?*" Paul had no expectation of leaving his mortal body to go to heaven. More next time, God willing.