

The Resurrection From The Dead

Feast of Trumpets

John W. Ritenbaugh (1932-2023)

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There was a time for us when if we had any thoughts at all about the resurrection of the dead, they were vague at best. At that time we probably also believed in the immortality of the soul and we may have even gone so far as to wonder if there was any connection between the immortality of the soul and the need for a resurrection. If we were already immortal, why have a resurrection, what purpose would it serve? But, as time went on, we had revealed to us either through Herbert W. Armstrong or some other source, that the Bible does not teach the immortality of the soul. Then, if we were thinking at all about the resurrection, the need of the resurrection became much more vital and I am sure that we began to pay a great deal more attention to that doctrine.

The resurrection of the dead is one of the most vital subjects in our Christian lives. I do not want it to ever be treated with an attitude very similar to what we might have had toward the immortality of the soul—something that we just take for granted.

The reason for why it is so important might be put off by saying, "Well, we're going to die and need to be resurrected." But there is a great deal more about the resurrection, a great deal more about being resurrected *in Christ*, than merely living again. You are aware that people have been brought back to life—in Old Testament times there are records of people being brought back to life—but there is something different, a major thing that is different about the resurrection as it is presented to us in the New Testament.

One of the reasons that the Feast of Tabernacles is so enjoyable is because of its relative immediacy. We can all get together, we can have a good time fellowshiping at a distant location and then the very next one is, at the most, only a year away and we can go through it again. Now there is nothing wrong with that, indeed, God wants us to have it and to enjoy it and to look forward to it, but Trumpets is the holy day that involves the real hope of a

Christian and its fulfillment is something that we know by faith. We know that fulfillment is fairly near now. In fact, it is the next major step in God's plan. But we do not know exactly when and because of that there is a tendency that even though we believe it, we put it in the background, sort of on the back burner, in the conduct of carrying out the daily routines of our life.

The fulfillment of the Day of Trumpets and what it means to us is something that excites us, but at the same time, something that is rather distant. But we cannot allow this to happen and the reason is because all the hopes of Christianity revolve around this day. Even the celebration, the placing of this day, by God, points this out. There are seven holy days; Trumpets is the fourth one, it is right in the middle, it is like the axle on which everything revolves and without the fulfillment of the events of the Day of Trumpets, then God's purpose is not going to come to fruition. So, it is important that we understand what the resurrection is about, so that our hope can be correct.

I Corinthians 15:19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

I am going to change one word and incidentally this is legal, it is allowable. The word "in," "for if *in* this life." The reason I am changing it is not because "in" is less correct, because "in" is the correct translation. I am going to change it to another preposition, simply because of English grammar use today. It will have a little bit more effectiveness to it. I am going to change it to the word "for." There are two things we can learn from this verse. He says, "Our hope in Christ is not just **for** this life" that is, it does not just pertain to this life, or it does not just apply to this life. That tells us that, for the Christian, there is a hope for this life.

You can begin to see that being in Christ involves things that pertain or are for this life, but also for another life as well. The major point of Paul's argument in the entire chapter is that the major hope in Christ lies beyond the grave. Let us understand that God intends that those who are in Christ, those who are Christians, those who have the Spirit of God should receive some benefit for that right now, but yet he also wants us to understand that it is not the major reason for our calling. The major reason for our calling is not right now, it is in the future. It is mostly for the future.

In addition to this, Paul wrote this in the perfect tense. The perfect tense indicates an action that began in the indefinite past and is continuing in the present and therefore it should read, "If for in this life we only have been hoping." "Hoping" is a continuous active part of our life, it is not something that we just do at the Feast of Tabernacles but rather God intends that we *hope* every day in the resurrection of the dead and all that it represents. This is so important because Paul is saying that our lives revolve in this *hope* that we have in Christ, both now and for the future. It is intended by God to be a constant factor as to why we do what we do. If there is no resurrection, he says, why are we doing what we do? We are of all men most pitiable.

The resurrection is exceedingly important. Also implied in this chapter is that unbelievers do not have this hope. Please get this! Unbelievers do not have this hope and as a result of that they conduct their lives differently, that is, mostly out of their hopes in this material world—everything they can get out of it. Their hope is in this world and therefore they love it. Remember what John said, "Love not this world" he said, "this world is passing away."

The unbelievers' hopes are in this world and that is why they love the world. What we love, we give our attention to. So what Paul is saying, without saying it directly, is that what a person hopes to get, what he hopes to achieve, or what he hopes to have, is what is going to determine what a person does with his life. That ought to lead to some interesting thinking.

Let us continue to chase this out a little bit so we can establish how important this *hope* is to us.

Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law.

The *King James Version* said, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

I do not want to perish. I do not know about you, but I think you are here because you do not want to perish either. There has to be a vision, there has to be a revelation. If the revelation or the vision is not there, what do people do? They cast off restraint. In other words, it is the vision, the revelation of God that makes a person walk a certain path. If it were not for that revelation

or that vision, then what would happen? At the very least we would more or less passively wander off the path.

The *Living Bible* translates it, "Where there is no revelation, the people run wild!" It puts a little bit more active and harsher interpretation of it and maybe that paraphrase is actually more descriptive of what is happening in this world. If people do not have the vision of what God is going to accomplish through the resurrection of the dead, what do they do? They cast off restraint, they run wild, they do whatever comes to their mind, whatever hope, whatever desire, whatever longing comes into their mind, that is what they do. Does that make them stick to the straight and narrow path that leads to the Kingdom of God? Of course not, they are constantly going off the true direction, off the path.

I want life to be meaningful and so this subject is really a major part of the question of what is the purpose of life, or as Mr. Armstrong put it, "Why were you born?" You were born to attain to the resurrection of the dead.

Romans 8:24 For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?

It is fairly easy to understand that once you have what it is that you desire, you no longer have to hope for it. It is a hope fulfilled, so you do not need that longing or desire for it any longer. We do not have what we are hoping for in its fullness. We have the vision of it, that vision may not be very clear, but there is a vision of it, there is belief in it, but I want you to mainly focus in on how important Paul says this is. *We are saved by it*. I thought we were saved by grace through faith. Yes we are!

That is ultimately how salvation comes, but God is not merely trying to save us. That is the easy part. The more difficult part is to achieve the fullness of His purpose for each one of us and that is for us to be created in His image and in order for that to occur, it requires our cooperation. We will not cooperate unless we are hoping in the right thing. If we are not hoping in what God hopes we hope for, we are going to go in a different direction because if the vision is not there, we are going to go off the path, so having the right hope is absolutely essential.

Romans 8:25 But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

Hope is so important because it plays a major role in salvation. It does so because hope is a powerful motivator. What we love, we pay attention to and if we hope to get something from what we love, it is going to motivate us to go in that direction. Hope influences us to either take or to not take certain actions, depending upon what it is that is hoped for. Now if we hope for something, we will generally do all that we can to make sure that what we hope for happens the way that we hope for. If we hope something does not happen, we generally do what we can to see that what we do not want to happen does not happen. It motivates us to go in a certain direction and to do certain things.

What if we hope for something that is beyond our immediate control? I know what you will do, you will still pray that what we hope for will happen or not happen. If there is nothing that we can do, we will still pray. That is how powerful hope is. It will make us do things even though we are not consciously thinking, but it will bend us in a certain direction because that hope is there. At the very least, we will at least wish, even if we do not pray, we will wish and we will fret and we will worry, until something is resolved. You see, our hopes, whether we are conscious of it or not, are constantly playing on our mind, they are there and they are working.

Hope is usually defined as a longing, or a desire, or an expectation of fulfillment. It can be passive or it can be intense, it can be for evil or it can be for good. The important thing is that we have the right hope because the Bible says, that along with faith and love, it is one of the three timeless and enduring eternal values. Think about that. There will never be a time in eternity when *hope* is not on your mind! Think about that! This is important.

I Corinthians 13:12-13 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now [that means in conclusion] abide [abide means "live"; it means "remain"; it means "endure in something that lasts"] faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

What Paul sees here is these three standing as a unity, they are linked together as one and yet standing apart and above anything else in Christian life. These three are absolutely essential in the Kingdom of God—faith, hope, and love. We are always going to have to trust God, we are going to be loving, and now we are learning that hope is going to be one of those eternal things as well.

Faith, hope, and love—these three are preeminent and they are absolutely essential. They are abiding realities to a full and abundant life. Why is hope so important? Because it is going to tend to move a person in the direction of the fulfillment of his hopes. There is that expectation, there is that desire, there is that longing, and I think that you can see in this life that so often, those hopes, those desires, those longings have to be held in check. Will it not be wonderful in the World Tomorrow, in the Kingdom of God, when every one of those hopes will be good, pure, generous, and kind? But hope will still be a factor in seeing those things fulfilled.

I Peter 1:1-3 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

I think most of us understand that hope is the major theme in I Peter and it was written by Peter to strengthen the feeble knees, as it is put in the book of Hebrews, of his brothers and sisters in Christ who were buckling under the weight of their Christian burdens, whatever they happened to be. So, right at the very beginning of this very strong exhortation, he reminds them of their hope.

Reflecting back on I Corinthians 13:13, Paul said that, "Love is the greatest." Faith, though, is primary, faith precedes the others, but it does not remain the most important. Faith is the foundation that the other two operate on. It is *hope*, as we would say today, "that makes the other two fly" it gives impetus to them. We can believe something, but if we do not hope in it, we will do

nothing. We can believe that love is the right thing to do but we will never take action on it unless we hope, unless we have the expectation of the fulfillment of whatever it is that we love.

Hope can move us along with intensity and enthusiasm to see how all the knowledge we pick up can be acted upon and fulfilled to its greatest capacity, depending upon how powerful that hope is. The first thing to note here is that this hope did not come to us because of our merit; it was something that was *given* to us. It was not owed to us; it came as a gift. We did not ask for it and we could not ask for it because we did not even know what to ask for. This is important to see in light of this welfare mentality that I mention every once in a while. This welfare mentality is a mindset that has been hammered into our minds by Satan from the time that we are born.

Governmental systems like socialism are evolved or devolved out of this mindset, but it began with Satan the Devil. What this mindset tells others and us is that we are owed things, people owe us things, God owes us things, governments owe us things. This does terrible things to our attitude toward God and our parents and government. It does terrible things to our approach to other people. It makes us seem far more important than we really are. It makes us neglect our duties and responsibilities and we look for government or for God to do everything. It perverts our hopes by destroying initiative and the inclination to serve.

God called us with purpose in mind and eventually that purpose is going to be to serve Him and all of mankind, full-time. But we have to be motivated and if our hope is always that somebody else will do it, somebody else will take care of it, somebody else will take care of me, initiative and responsibility are devastated. God has given us the capacity to hope to motivate us to do things on our own, to have the initiative to step out and so God, in His mercy, gave us a living hope. Even as we have no control over our begetting in our mother's womb, we had no part in this either. It was entirely a creative act on the Father's part to start us on the road toward a new creation, a creation He has purposed from the very beginning. Now this is a living hope, as contrasted to dead ones.

Now what is 'dead' in the biblical sense? Remember Jesus said, "Let the dead bury the dead." Those dead people were alive but they were unconverted.

They did not have the Spirit of God, and so they were dead. God has given us a living hope and what He means by this is two things. First of all, He wants us to understand that this hope, which is really an attribute of His mind, is an attribute of Him, an attribute of His Spirit. If you think that God does not have hope, reread Romans 8, where it says that, "He subjected the earth to vanity in hope." God hopes that His subjection of earth to vanity is going to produce the right things. So, God hopes as well and this hope is a gift of His Spirit that has come to us and it is energized with the energy of God. It is living and He intends that it be flowing in the right direction and if it is living, unlike that which is dead, it will produce!

Do you recall what it says in Psalm 146:3? God said to, "put not your trust in princes." He says, "their breath goes forth and that very day, their thoughts perish." (verse 4, KJV) The dead not only cannot think but they also do nothing, they cannot work. God has given us a hope that is living, it is energized, flowing from the very God of creation and it is a hope that will produce the right works, it will motivate to the right works. This hope remains, it abides, and it is eternal, contrasted to the hopes of the dead in this world, because of what is happening to it.

John said, "The world passes away." (I John 2:17) It is interesting that the world even uses the euphemism "passes away" for death. We can live a life of hope that enables us to have an entirely different approach to God, to government, to other people, to our mates, to our fellow workers, to everybody and to everything. Because of this hope, what the world calls "our world view" is shaped. I will tell you, it is so important, now He also says that this hope receives its support from the resurrection of Christ.

Are you aware that nobody was resurrected until Christ was resurrected? The Bible is very clear, it is one of those little things that we will pass over unless somebody either tells us or we have to be very carefully looking at the scriptures or we are at least reading a Bible that is worthwhile. Some of these new Bibles change words around that are not there in the Hebrew and the Greek. No, in the Old Testament and up until the time of Christ, people were *raised from the dead*, or *their breath came back into them* or *they had life again*. But nobody was ever said to be *resurrected* until Christ was resurrected.

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God puts a little different twist because He wants to draw your attention to the resurrection, not merely coming to life. There is a big difference between the two. Nobody was resurrected until Christ was resurrected. Other people were raised from the dead but God does not refer to them as being resurrected. They rose, they came to life, but they were not resurrected! Now, because Christ was resurrected, he says right here in verse 4:

I Peter 1:4 To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

We can look forward then to an inheritance that is imperishable, it is incorruptible, it is undefiled, it is absolutely reserved in heaven for us. Now those words, I am sure, were very carefully chosen because the tendency is to think of inheritances in terms of things that are worldly, especially a Jew, who would be mindful of the promises that were made to Abraham and the inheritance of the Land of Promise.

What is the contrast? Think of Israel's history in the Land of Promise. It did not turn out too well, did it? Was it corruptible? Yes, it was. Was it even taken away from them? Yes, it was. Was it undefiled? Oh no, it was not undefiled, plenty of filthy things going on there as well. They were even booted out so it was not even reserved for them. So the contrast is made that what we are to hope for is the exact opposite of this because ours is imperishable, incorruptible, undefiled, and absolutely reserved. What is it that we really hope for in life? I want you to answer this question yourself. What is it that you really hope for out of life? Think of this life *now*. Forget about the resurrection of the dead for a moment.

My answer to you is going to have to do with the resurrection of the dead. I think if I took a survey, I would probably get a lot of different answers, they would be quite varied depending upon what a person hopes for out of this life. I am not going to say that those things that you would respond would be wrong, but I am looking not so much for specific answers in this case, but rather a summary answer. I will tell you what I think it is.

What we would all like to have is a *quality life*. We might have some what different definitions of what a quality life is, but how would you like to live by God's definition of what a quality life is? I have just told you what our

hope is, it is to *live life the way God does, at His quality, at His level*. Make sure that is inscribed into your mind because it has very much to do with how our life is going to be conducted now!

Do you remember the question that is asked, all the way back in the book of Ezekiel in chapter 33? God Himself asked the question, "How should we then live?" and He answers it Himself. He says, "As I live," saith the Lord. Is man living the way God is? That is almost a dumb question. What is it that got ruined when Adam and Eve sinned? What got ruined was the kind of life that God created Adam and Eve for. He created them in His image and expected them to live the way He lives. What did Satan do? He interrupted the process right at the very beginning. It did not take much—all he had to do was induce them to sin and immediately they were not living the way God lives. And because they were not living the way God lives they could not take advantage of the beautiful creation that God made for them. Instead they began to treat the creation the way they treated each other and themselves, by sinning.

Think of the grandest moments that you have ever had in life and you wish life could continue in that vein. Boy, if it could only be like this all the time. It is coming! But before it can come to you and me, we have to begin to demonstrate to God that we will live that way. Otherwise, that hope will never be attained to. That is what Christianity is all about, putting into practice the way God lives, so that we can live it forever, and not only we can live it forever, *everybody* is living the same way. That is awesome! Do you not hope that everybody can live that way, or is it just something that you hope for yourself? That is limiting that hope!

Philippians 3:8-16 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

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Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. [for the resurrection] Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things, which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal [the resurrection] for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. [summary statement] Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk [let us live] by the same rule; let us be of the same mind.

You ought to be able to see that this series of verses makes attaining the resurrection of the dead as the first priority in life. Paul says from his own experience that, "Everything else is rubbish" by comparison. It is not merely being raised to life that is of super-importance because as we have already seen, others have been raised to life from the dead before. What is important is the kind of life that lies beyond being raised to life, but we cannot have that quality of life except by means of the resurrection Jesus went through and Paul writes it of such a priority right now.

We are going to look at something here that is very important to Christianity. Paul says, "That I may be found in Him," it means "in union with." In the Bible's descriptive language, it portrays actually being inside of, *in*, that is what the word "in" means.

Paul, as an outgrowth of this wrote, in I Corinthians 12, where he used the illustration of us being the body of Christ. Some people are eyes, some people are ears, but we are all *in* Christ, we are in union with Him. In Ephesians 1 and 2, he talks about Christ being the Head of that body, He does the thinking for it and directs the rest of the body, part of which is on the inside of Him. His Body is a unity, we are in Christ, and we are in union with Him. This union, this fellowship, is so tightly knit, that virtually everything that we experience in Christianity is viewed in the Bible as being experienced with Christ. *He is right there*, it is a union that is so tight, so close, so warm, so loving, so concerned, it leads to marriage. That is a pretty tight relationship. Verse 10 is a key to understanding this.

Philippians 3:10 That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.

It is important because it shows Paul's desire to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. Here in John 17 is a Bible definition. Bible definitions are always so simply put.

John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

What did Paul just say? "That I may know Him." We all understand that this word "know" in the Bible means to be intimate with. It even has sexual undertones or overtones to it, depending on the context in which it appears. The word connotes an intimacy that is so close that it actually goes to the sexual union.

When you know somebody like that, you really know them, or you should. Are you beginning to get a drift as to why this is so important to our life now and to the resurrection? Paul's desire is to continue and to increase his fellowship with Christ, a fellowship that has already begun and to have the power of the resurrected Christ operating fully in his life. What Paul is expressing in verse 10, in a little bit more dynamic verbiage is, "I want to be like Him! I want to be just like Him! I will do anything! I have already given up everything else," he is saying. "It is rubbish compared to being like Him, in all of His power and glory that He has now and to be able to live like He lives."

Paul expresses that "desire to be like Him" so intensely that he is willing to share Christ's suffering, all the way to death, if it will make him like Him. He is willing to go through anything! He will do whatever it takes to be like Christ, so that he can continue to live as His companion, in whatever capacity Christ assigns him to in the Kingdom of God. Paul wants to be so identified with Christ, so much in His image, it is as though his life disappears in death, only to be resurrected in Christ.

Here is where we come back in the picture. This "being in Christ" has two aspects to it: the one is the legal one, which is something that is imputed by

God, on the basis of our faith in Christ. So legally, He puts us in Him. It is imputed.

The second aspect, though—we will call it the practical or the experiential—is the aspect in which faith is expressed by the believer in the way that he lives. In other words, he lives the way he does because Christ is in him and he is in Christ. That faith is idealistic, it is perfectionist in its desire to be like Christ, so as to gain a full understanding of Him, to know Him by sharing experiences with Him, to be so wrapped up in Him, it is though Christ was all the world to the Christian.

What is the result? It is to know Christ, and to know Christ is eternal life! If you know Christ, you know the Father too. You know Them because you are living the same way They do. Not in its fullness, but we have started down the path. The amount we grow is very largely going to depend upon how sharply etched that hope of "being like Them" is in our minds.

Let us carry this a little further in Romans 6. We will clarify how the Bible shows this principle, over and over again, of being "in Christ." We are in Christ so that we come to know Christ and we are sharing our experiences in life with Him.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

Listen to this answer.

Romans 6:2-3 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Do you see what is behind the scene here? He is saying, "How can you involve Christ in your sins?" You are in Him! To somebody who is a little bit less mystical, that does not make any sense at all, but what I am talking about here is something that the Christian *knows*, by faith—that he is in Christ and Christ is in him. We are sharing life together and the purpose for sharing life together is so we come to know Christ, so we can be in that resurrection and share life with Him for all eternity and life with all those

others who are living the same way. Does not Christ say to His disciples in John 16, "the Father and I will come and make Our abode in you"? Sure He did. This is what He is talking about; this is the reason for it. So that we live like They do. How can we continue in sin, if we are dead to sin?

Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him.

What Paul is saying, it is as though we are experiencing it together. Did he not say in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me"? This identification that the Bible makes between us and Christ is so close.

Romans 6:8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.

We are going to be raised with Him as well. Paul repeats the statement in II Timothy 2:11.

Romans 6:4 Therefore we were buried with Him.

He repeats this in Colossians 2:12-13, so we are raised with Him, we are buried with Him.

Romans 8:17 And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

We suffer with Him, we are heirs with Him, and we are going to be glorified with Him.

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

We are going to live and reign with Him!

Revelation 19:7-8 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

We are going to be married to Him, which is pretty close association. Do you not think that Christ wants His bride to be living the way He does? Certainly He does.

I John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

So we are going to be like Him! The process of identification with Christ has begun and is not yet complete, but it is moving in that direction and it is our responsibility to do what we can to submit to God, so we are living like God.

Psalms 16:1-5 Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust. O my soul, you have said to the Lord, "You are my Lord, My goodness is nothing apart from You." As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight." Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god; their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, nor take up their names on my lips. O Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; . . .

Cup usually means trial. David is showing God on both sides here. For good and bad, God is our inheritance, but He is also with him through these trials.

Psalms 16:5-11 . . . You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance. I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night seasons. I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. For

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You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life [Remember, without vision the people perish, they go off the path.]; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

The **hope** of a Christian is not merely to be resurrected; it is to be resurrected in order to continue a relationship in and with a Family. It is to continue a relationship that has the Father and the Son as its focus, but is in no way limited to Them. Again, think of the greatest joys that you have had in life. Is it not in being in the presence of and doing the things of life, conversing, planning, working, building, meeting challenges, entertaining, laughing, playing, eating, with those we love and with those who love us? Is life not enjoyable then?

God has shown us the path of life and it too is a living path, because the one walking that way is already on that path, and they will have the resurrection into the Family of God before them. That path leads them without a break into the presence of God to continue the fellowship with eternal life added. That is why all of the spiritual, moral, and ethical commands, all the counsel and exhortations that are given in God's Word are given to show us how to stay on the path that leads to His presence, so that we can live in a way that will mold us into His image. In Psalm 17, David concludes.

Psalm 17:15 As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

To have His likeness is not just to be spirit like He is, but also to be like Him in *quality of life*. If we are that way, then the relationship with Him and His sons will continue for all eternity. That is the Christian hope!

Let us conclude in Ecclesiastes 3. This is the chapter that has there is a time for this and a time for that and it gets a person thinking about time and when we schedule things and how we prioritize things.

Ecclesiastes 3:9-11 What profit has the worker from that in which he labors? I have seen the God-given task with which the sons of

men are to be occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its time.

Think about this—

Ecclesiastes 3:11 Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

God has endowed us with the sense of the future, with a sense of time, with a wondering about what goes on beyond the grave: Is there really a grave, is there really a life there, do we have immortality, is this life all that there is? He has endowed man to think about this. But unfortunately, as Solomon says, nobody can figure out what He is doing. Without vision the people perish, without the revelation people cast off restraint, they go off the path.

So when it says, "they do not know what He is doing from the beginning" it does not mean what He is doing in His creative physical acts, but of the purpose of life. That has been revealed to us, so that we might have before us the same *hope* that God has before us, that we might share all eternity with Him and live in the way that He does. And if we do, if we have caught the vision and see what the resurrection is, the resurrection of and by itself, is merely the threshold through which we step in order to continue at all of its fulfillment, the kind of life that God has already introduced to us that we have begun to put into practice and that we will be able to continue as His companion, as His children for all eternity. That is what the resurrection represents!