

## **THERE IS HOPE!**

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The ancients of Greece and Rome knew how to enjoy themselves in the present, but the thought of the future struck a chill into their hearts. Old age was dreaded - not because it might lead to senility, but because it would lead to death. In the words of the great Greek playwright, Sophocles: "*Not to be born at all - that is by far the best fortune; the second best is as soon as one is born with all speed to return thither whence one has come*" I.e. death in infancy was preferable to growing up to a conscious anticipation of having to die. Aristotle, the eminent Greek philosopher, declared, "*Death is the most terrifying of things, for it is the end*".

It was a dark and hopeless world into which the light of the Gospel shone. The Apostle Peter was striking a genuinely new note when he wrote to some new Christians in Asia Minor: "Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of his great mercy he gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living hope" (1 Peter 1.3)

This was wonderfully good news to Peter's original readers in AD 63. This too is good news for his readers in 2006. For we too live in a society where many fear death. Oh, some may put on a brave front and say they accept death in all its bleakness. But that is not the way most people want to think - most would dearly love to believe in life after death. But because they are uncertain about what lies ahead, they do their best to minimise or forget death. Death becomes the last thing many people wish to talk about.

Thank God, that with Jesus there is hope. But the question arises in the minds of some: how can we be certain of this hope? It has been said: "*Probably nothing in the world arouses more false hope than the first hours of a diet*" Is Christian hope any different? How can we be certain that this hope of life beyond the grave isn't just wishful thinking? How can we be sure that what the Gospel promises is any more certain than the promises made by dieticians, by politicians, by second-hand car salesmen & the like?.

The good news is that we can be certain of the future, because of what has happened in the past. Our hope of life to come is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is a world of a difference between a philosophy and Christianity. Philosophies deal with ideas, whereas Christianity deals with history. The Anglo-Saxon derived word "*Gospel*" doesn't mean "Good Idea", but "*Good News*" The Gospel is Good News because it speaks of something which has happened. God raised Jesus from the dead. And because God raised Jesus from the dead, we can be certain that he will raise us too.