



HOPE IS  
THE  
ANCHOR

PRESENTED

by

01. JOEL NEDHHOOO

on

*The  
Back to God  
Hour*

THE CELEBRATION. MOACAST OF

THE REFORMED CHURCHES  
of  
Australia and New Zealand

## HOPE IS THE ANCHOR

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor in the soul, a hope that enters into the inner man behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone, as a forerunner on our behalf. . . Hebrews 6:19; 20

The Hong Kong Harbor doesn't have many wharves, many quays, many piers. The large International Terminal where passenger liners still dock is about the only place where passengers and cargo can be directly off loaded to the shore. For the rest, the cargo ships must anchor out in the harbor which stretches from Kowloon to the floating city of Aberdeen. The junks nestle close to the side of the ships and putt back and forth between them and the warehouse on the shore. Hong Kong Harbor depends on anchors a great deal.

Anchors are extremely important. When the tide comes in a harbor like this, the strain on the anchor chains increases, and when the wind stiffens from out to sea, everything depends on the strength of their cables and on the way the hooks have established their purchase on the rocky harbor bottom. As long as the anchors hold, the ships can float dead in the water, propellers still, while the cranes swing their stuff over the side to the waiting tugs.

It is no wonder that anchors have become an almost universal symbol of stability, strength and rescue in time of danger. For the anchors that stay the ships that lie below Victoria Peak in the Hong Kong Harbor are not recent ones. As long as men have sailed, they have devised weight and hooks that have been used to hold a ship fast and keep it from being driven on rocks.

Anchors were used during Bible times. One particularly fascinating episode recorded in the Bible tells how the apostle Paul was a prisoner on a ship that weathered a fierce Cairo Mutiny of type

storm that had torn away the ship's rudder and topped its sails. The book of Acts tells how the terror-stricken crew drifted helplessly across the Sea of Adria. Finally, they suspected they were nearing land. "So they sounded and found twenty fathoms; a little farther on they sounded again and found fifteen fathoms. And fearing that [they] might run on the rocks, they let out four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come." (Acts 27: 28-29).

The Bible also invites us to think about an anchor in connection with a situation that, at first glance, does not seem to have anything to do with anchors at all. I am talking about the ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven. The Bible suggests that as a person's gaze follows Jesus as He rises into heaven's courts, it is as if one is throwing out his anchor. Letting one's gaze follow Christ into heaven is like throwing out an anchor. In a sense the gaze itself is like the anchor chain. At the end of the chain the anchor is hooked onto something in heaven. And the anchor has a name. The name of the anchor is hope.

The name of the anchor is hope! You can see at once that all this is enormously important. For if there is anything you and I need, it is hope. Hope is the anchor that gives stability to those who believe in Jesus. I don't know how much you know about Jesus, but I daresay that if you are anything like I am, you need hope more than you need food and water.

The idea that we have been talking about together are expressed in Hebrews 6 in language that is rather obscure, so we will have to spend a little time talking about it after we notice what it says. Hebrews tells us to "seize the hope set before us, and then it shows that the hope in mind is related to what happened when Jesus Christ ascended into heaven. We read, "We have this as a

sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf ... " (vv. 19,20).

These words talk about a hope that is on anchor of the soul. Whereas the anchor of a ship is dropped down into the sea's depths, hope is cast into "the inner shrine behind the curtain where Jesus is." This strange language is worth studying and understanding.

The Bible views Jesus Christ as a heavenly person who came into our world and left it again without being destroyed. Events of unsurpassed importance occurred while He was with us. Jesus, whose birth was heralded by angels of heaven, was received back up into heaven when His work was accomplished. He came with His physical body strong and beautiful from His mother's womb, and He left with the same physical body glorified through His suffering death, and resurrection.

Those who admire Jesus, but who believe that He was destroyed by death, have a religion that is different from the religion found in the Bible. Acts 1, in the New Testament, contains a straightforward account of Jesus' life after His resurrection from the dead and of Jesus moving from the realm of this earth into glory. We read: "[Jesus Christ showed himself alive to his apostles after his suffering], appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the kingdom of God.

"So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses. . . . And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was

lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight" (Acts 1:3, 6-9).

Now, this is pretty hard to believe if one has adopted a totally naturalistic view of himself and the world. If a person believes that the natural, material universe is all there is, then obviously the account of Jesus' ascension into heaven is some kind of fairy tale. But who says that material reality is the only reality there is? Many of us are inclined to believe that there is more to human existence than that which can be explained in terms of the physical. And those who read and believe the Bible know that there is a God, that He exists in a realm which we call heaven, and we can be related to Him. Furthermore, those who believe the Bible believe that we are more than material beings. We have a spiritual element in us, too. We have a soul. In fact, the sentences from Hebrews 6 we read a few moments ago, spoke of a hope which was the anchor of the soul.

Just 'because many people have rejected the Bible's revelation of God does not mean that there is no God. When people believed that the world was flat, they did not succeed in making it flat with their erroneous belief. So, too, those who reject the Biblical record of Jesus' ascension do not in fact make the ascension a legend. The Bible's account is unmistakable and it is trustworthy. Thus we must begin by acknowledging that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, survived His bitter sufferings and forty days after His resurrection He transferred His headquarters from this earth back to heaven again.

So, Jesus ascended into heaven, and that is a fact. But that fact doesn't do us much good unless we respond to it in faith. Use the figure of speech that we found in Hebrews 6, we are to let our gaze follow Jesus as He ascends and we are to keep our attention fixed on Him just as a ship throws its



anchor into the harbor's depths, we are invited to throw our anchor into the courts of heaven. As Hebrews says, "We have this [hope] as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf."

What a beautiful word *hope* is! And yet what a sad word! For when we use it we are usually in a hopeless situation. "I hope I won't lose my job," we say, and when we say that, we reveal that we have fear that we might. "I hope my son will get better," we say, and when we say that, we show that we have some fear that he might not. Hope, as we generally use the word, is rooted in possibility, not in reality.

But that is not true of Christian hope. The hope that is described in the Bible is rooted in reality. Those who believe the Bible are invited to establish their hope not in terms of something that might happen, but in terms of something that did happen. Jesus has come to our world, He has suffered and died, He has risen again, and He has ascended into heaven, and therefore Christian hope exists as those who believe in Jesus let their gaze follow Jesus' ascension. They know that He is in heaven, and the stability, direction, and joy of their life are rooted in this supremely important reality.

Are you too proud to consider what Biblical hope is and what it could do for you? Are you so self-sufficient that you don't think you need it? We all need this hope. Look at what the ascension of Jesus Christ can mean for you in terms of hope, if you receive the Bible's message in faith. It can do at least two things.

The first thing it can do is assure you that the biggest problem in your life has been solved. That is the problem of sin. This is the root problem. Sin is the cause of our frequently disappointing performance. More importantly sin is the cause of your

death. Sin is the great sickness that renders human experience ultimately disappointing.

Jesus takes care of this problem for all those who believe in Him. It is very instructive to notice that when the book of Hebrews describes the ascension of Jesus Christ, it does not emphasize the physical aspects of this event. The Bible sees no problem at that point. When one remembers that the person who ascended into heaven was the great creator of the heavens and the earth, there is no problem. But the Bible casts Jesus' ascension into heaven in terms that indicate that Jesus' entrance into heaven signified the glorious fact that payment for human sin had been made.

The Bible talks about our hope as something that enters "into the inner shrine behind the curtain" as our gaze follows the ascended Jesus into heaven. This strange phrase is a reference to the complicated system of sacrifice that is described in the Old Testament, especially in the book of Leviticus. If you are familiar with the Old Testament, you will remember that the tabernacle and the temple were built very precisely with various courts, or shrines. At the heart of the holiest places there was the holiest shrine of all. There the holy ark of God was found. And into this holiest of places, the high priest of the people of Israel entered with the blood of sacrifice once a year. Hebrews 6, which talks about our hope entering into the shrine, suggests that when Jesus ascended into heaven, He went as the greatest high priest of all into the holiest place of all, the very presence of God.

That this is the idea behind Hebrews 6 is clear from a very specific description of Jesus' ascension found in Hebrews 9 which describes it as the work of a high priest going into the Holy of Holies. Notice the direct reference to the work of the high priest on Yom Kippur, the great day of atonement. "Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with

hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven it self now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:25, 26).

Now I don't know how familiar you are with the Old Testament description of sacrifice, but those sacrifices were in many instances bloody and horrible. They did not pay for sin, but they served as a dramatic reminder of the true nature of sin. They showed that sin brought death. And now the Bible says that Jesus put sin away by the sacrifice of Himself for us. Because He did, it is possible for the love and grace of the Almighty to flow into the lives of sinful people like us. 9r

An illustration of what happened in connection with sin would be something like this: Let's say you had a dreadful disease that would take your weight down, down, down, and down, and you were brought to the hospital and the doctors diagnosed your disease as one that could be treated with a particular medication. So you would take the medication, and one day the doctors would say, "All the tests tell us that your disease is conquered. The blood tests are negative. It's over. You don't have to worry about your sickness any more. You can go home." And you would go home. You would be weak, and it would take you many weeks to get your strength back. But your disease would be conquered.

Well, that is the way it is now for those who believe that Jesus died for the payment of sin, and He rose again and now appears in the holy shrine on behalf of His people. They know that their sin problem has been taken care of. Surely, they are

still weak because they still have the results of their disease. But the disease has been conquered. Jesus has paid the price of sin totally.

The ascension of Jesus is the great fact that announces that our great High Priest is in heaven and our sins are gone if we believe in Him.

Now do you see why it is so important that you believe that Jesus is your Savior? You must confess your sins, and you must flee to Him. And you see Him in the heavenly Holy of Holies with the blood of the new covenant which He shed, you may be sure that your sins are gone. And you can sing: "I have no other righteousness, have no other plea. It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me."

I don't know: maybe the sin problem doesn't bother you very much. If it doesn't, I can see why you are not interested in Christianity. But if it does, here is marvelous hope. Your eye can follow Jesus as He ascends into heaven and you can know that He's there right now, pleading your cause and making your salvation sure.

The second way the ascension of Jesus can fortify your hope is expressed in an astonishing word in Hebrews 6: 19 which says that Jesus Christ has gone into the inner shrine having become a forerunner on our behalf.

The ascended Jesus, who went into the holy shrine of heaven, went there as a forerunner. We are apt to miss the word *forerunner* in a hasty reading of the Bible. It is, nevertheless, extremely important. For one thing, it shows the difference between the way Jesus went into the holy shrine of heaven and the way the high priest of the Old Testament went into the Holy of Holies. The high priest went in alone, and nobody ever followed him. The blood he brought for the sins of the people was not powerful enough to open the way so that they could come in after him. In fact, the

blood was not strong enough to enable the high priest himself to stay there. He had to come out of the Holy of Holies himself. But Jesus went into the holy shrine of heaven and He stayed there. He prepares the way for His people so that they can come there, too.

As you let your gaze follow Jesus into the holy shrine of heaven, you are actually watching human flesh, like your flesh, going into the very presence of God. We now know that a person like ourselves has gone into heaven and we will follow Him.

At the beginning of the Bible, we read that when God created man, He created man for fellowship with God. God and man were friends originally. We were made in the image of God to be friends of God. But man chose to be a friend of Satan instead, and from that moment onward our circumstances have become very painful and we have been alienated from our creator. But as our eye follows Jesus into the holy shrine of heaven, we can cheer because we know that a man has once again entered into the presence of God and man and God can talk together with nothing standing in their way.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, to be sure, but He is also a human being. His flesh is our flesh. The blood that throbbed within His veins during the course of His life on earth was the same as ours. The life He lived and the death He died was like our lives and our deaths. But He rose from the grave, and now our gaze follows Him into the holy shrine of heaven. That is our flesh that has gone into heaven. That is our brother who is there talking with God.

Those who believe that Jesus is their Savior and who surrender themselves totally to Him know that just as surely as Jesus ascended and entered into heaven itself, they are going to follow Him, and

on, day they will stand in the very presence of God. Jesus is the forerunner. His people will follow Him.

A glorified human being is in heaven. Glorified human flesh is in heaven. And He is there getting everything ready for all His brothers and sisters who believe in Him. They are excited when they think about what He is doing there for them. They are the people with hope in this world. It's not hope based on possibilities, but it is based on realities—the realities of one ascended Savior who is the forerunner of a whole host of people who are going to come and join Him.

Such a hope is an anchor for the soul. An anchor—think of an anchor! Think of it holding a ship steady as the tide comes in, or as the wind stiffens and whitewater appears in the harbor. The anchor keeps the vessel from being dashed against the rocks or from running aground. An anchor think of our lives! We are buffeted, too. There are times when circumstances become so intolerably horrifying that we want to throw away our anchor, too.

You need an anchor. You need this anchor. You need the living hope the Bible talks about. Hope is the anchor. Do you know Jesus? Do you believe that He is the very Son of God and the Son of Man? Do you know that His sacrifice on Calvary was enough to pay for your sins? Now, let your gaze follow Him into the very courts of heaven. Let Jesus be the rock and anchor for you. Think of it: your anchor is holding you because it is attached to Jesus. Have you ever been in a storm? Will you board and throw out your anchor to keep you from drifting, and have you ever wondered, "What's down there holding me?" Well, when you think of the anchor we have just been talking about, you may ask, "Oh, wonder what's holding it?" Jesus is. As your vision follows the ascended



Jesus into heaven, you may be certain that is  
Jesus in the holy shrine before the very presence  
of God who is preparing a place for you - this  
Jesus is holding the anchor fast.

Christianity is a beautiful religion, isn't it? Jesus  
has ascended into heaven. Receive this gospel in  
faith and live with your life anchored in the hope  
that Jesus gives all those who believe in Him.

1

The message printed in this pamphlet was heard over the  
Back to God Hour, which is broadcast every Sunday in  
co-operation with the Christian Reformed Churches of  
America, in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria,  
Tasmania and Western Australia, and by shortwave  
throughout the world.

P.O. BOX 108,  
SUTHERLAND, N.S.W. 2232

P.O. Box 15392  
New Lynn  
AUCKLAND N.Z.