

LIFE
Part 1
The Centerpiece of Hope

*...Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have... **1 Peter 3:15***

The apostle Peter instructs us to be able to give an account of the hope that is within us. This past week I posed a question at random to a few Christian friends. I asked them to describe the hope that being a Christian gave them. Most of the answers were predictable such as "Christianity is my ticket to heaven" or "My mother passed away about ten years ago and I'm looking forward to seeing her again. What's your answer? Can you describe the Hope in your heart that being a Christian gives you? The account of the hope I would give would not be so much about my destination after death or about a missed relative or friend that has passed away, but about receiving Life, now. What life you ask? Can a person receive a different life while he is yet living and breathing on this earth? Paul the apostle said He received just such a thing.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20

Paul tells us that he has exchanged the life he was living with a new and different life. That life is none other than the life of Jesus the Anointed Himself. My hope as a Christian begins and ends with that life.

So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. Acts 11:26 Christians are followers of Christ. Christ is not Jesus' last name. The word Christ means anointed, from the Greek word [Kris tos]. The word Christian means followers of the anointed [Christ], from the Greek word [Kris tee an os]. Jesus the anointed made it perfectly clear what our role would be in becoming a follower, disciple, believer or a Christian.

Jesus said in John chapter 15, "*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*"

The same life that was in Him as the vine would flow through us as the branches. He also tells us that apart or separated from the vine or life there can be no fruit. Our hope then, is to be apart of a fruit bearing people [the branch] able to feed a starving world. This fruit is only made possible by being connected to the Life of God [the vine].

Jesus had told his disciples he was about to go away. As a result the disciples became concerned that if He were about to leave them how would they be able to continue as true disciples apart from Him. These were legitimate concerns for them and also a real concern for us who have lived our lives long after Jesus lived on earth in the flesh.

Listen to what Jesus prayed during his last hours with his disciples to ease their concerns and ours as well.

I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ²⁴"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." John 17:22-24&26

The hope for humanity is summed up by Jesus in just three words, "I in them".

"Christ in you the hope of glory" [Col. 1:27] was Paul's central message of hope to the church. "May Christ be formed in you," was Paul's prayer of hope for the church [Gal. 4:19. Jesus said, "*I have come that you might have life*". John 10:10

A complete immersion in that life is our hope. God's banquet table for humanity has been made ready and the centerpiece of the feast is His Life, and our Hope.