

**Sermon Preached**

**At**

**Burial Service for Opanin Akwasi Boateng**

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**Venue: Agogo. Asante-Akyem**

**Title: “In Christ all shall be made Alive”**

**By**

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**A Glorious Eternity Beyond**

Birth and death are phenomena we are all too familiar with. They are the two big transition points which every man and woman will inevitably go through; they are the entry and exit points of life, as it were.

But there's yet a third glorious transition you can guarantee for yourself today if only you will repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what our departed brother laid hold of in his journey of life on earth. There's a glorious eternity beyond. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, his protégé:

*“Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;*

*“That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;*

*“Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Tim 6:17-19).*

Earthly riches only endure for a moment, but the good works of love and mercy which we do in obedience to God are a foundation on which we build a future of eternity with Christ.

Our hope is the Resurrected Christ and His way of truth. Even as we mourn our departed brother, father and uncle, let's be consoled that death has a conqueror in Christ (2 Tim. 1:10).

The bodily resurrection of the dead is at the centre of the Christian message and faith. Otherwise, our faith is to no purpose. This is the message of hope the Apostle Paul shares with us in 1 Cor. 15.

But how many people truly believe in a future resurrection of the saints even among professed Christians?

### **A Sacrilegious Denial**

The message of the resurrection of the dead is not universally accepted. It's seen in the contrary message being preached by some that there's no resurrection of the dead. Thus the apostle asked:

*“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” (1 Cor. 15:12).*

It's quite illogical to maintain that there's no resurrection of the dead and yet preach that Christ rose from the dead. Yet some in the Corinthian church did hold this very untenable position. It was a position influenced by worldly philosophy.

In first-century Greece, in which Corinth was one of its great centres of philosophy and religion, the prevailing view on the after-life was that only the soul had a chance of living on in some other form but that there would be no bodily resurrection of the dead. Apparently, some of the converts to the church continued to hold onto this belief and made it part of their Christian dogma. But Paul said it was inconsistent with Christian doctrine.

If you look at the no-resurrection belief critically, it does remove all basis for hope in the hereafter. It has the potential to negatively affect one's whole philosophy of life making one draw up the wrong priorities! It reasons, 'If there's no resurrection of the dead, why bother to serve God? Why even bother to believe?'

Even the tree has a better hope! “For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease” (Job 14:7).

So then, the no-resurrection theory comes with serious implications for our spiritual lives (and ultimate destiny) as Christians.

First, it conflicts sharply with the factual, evidence-based message of the faith that Christ Jesus, our Saviour, rose from the dead! It negates it; it argues against it.

Yet the resurrection of Christ is not a myth, an invented story to give us a false hope in a rather sentimental way. It's something which actually happened; it's a fact to which there were eye-witnesses.

And it's an integral part of the gospel which we must continually believe for our salvation. Otherwise, we will have believed in vain. The resurrection of Christ provides a logical basis for the resurrection of the dead! There can be no other conclusion, so argues the Apostle Paul. He wrote in the opening verses of 1 Corinthians 15:

*“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;*

*“By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.*

*“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;*

*“And that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures:*

*“”And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:*

*“After that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.*

*“After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles.*

*“And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time” (vv. 1- 8).*

The resurrection of Christ as an event witnessed by hundreds is beyond dispute. However, the most exciting part is that the risen Christ was “seen” by the Apostle Paul, even though he was born at the wrong time (and never saw Jesus physically). He encountered Him in His post-Resurrection glory on the road to Damascus.

That is an experience which awaits everyone who comes to believe in Christ. He or she ought to “see” the risen Messiah – not physically as others saw Him for forty days – but in a uniquely supernatural way. They must come to a personal conviction that Jesus Christ who died for their sins is alive and not dead. The proof of His being alive must be witnessed by them personally. And the reason is simple: Because He is alive, it should be possible for Him to be seen by you and me.

That is our collective experience as a church. Our Jesus is a living Jesus, a healing Jesus, a miracle-working Jesus. We see Him by His supernatural works of deliverance and grace in our lives.

That is why we have so much hope for our departed brother. He will rise again! He ‘saw’ the risen Lord, and that experience convinced him beyond the testimony of men that Christ was alive!

And He imparted to him His resurrection power by his obedience to the gospel – that “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures” and that “He rose again the third day according to the scriptures”.

There’s a causal salvific linkage between the death and resurrection of Christ. You can’t believe one while rejecting the other and be saved. (See Acts 10:39-44).

Still, some insist that there is no bodily resurrection which implies that Christ is not risen (1 Cor. 15:13). The idea is absolutely subversive of the Christian message and faith. All at once, it robs our message and faith of its vitality and purpose in a domino effect of negation which even impugns our integrity as servants of God propagating His word.

**If Christ is not Risen Everything is Pointless!**

**#It means “our preaching is vain” (14b).**

It strikes at the promise of the Christian message which is the hope of eternal life based on the resurrection of Christ from the dead. It's a promise from the Father Himself who cannot lie and who through His abundant mercy “hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (Titus 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:3; 1 John 2:25).

To deny the resurrection therefore is to take away the basis for the hope. It reduces the Christian message to a fairy tale!

**#It also means our faith in Christ is vain (14c).**

This is not lack of faith in the historical reality of Christ or His ‘moral teachings’ but faith in His ability to deliver us from death into eternal life.

The Lord Jesus Christ made no bones about His mission on earth. It was about recovery: “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). In John 5:24 He declared:

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life”.*

On the way to perform one of the greatest miracles of all time – the resurrection of Lazarus of Bethany who had been dead four days – He stated:

*“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:  
“And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this?”(John 11:25-26).*

Yet again, sceptics pour cold water on it all by saying there's no resurrection! Who will you believe?

The Saviour says those who hear His Word and believe in Him have “passed from death to life” and therefore shall never die. However, unless you repent of your sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, your sins will bring you to condemnation. You will miss eternal life in the Kingdom of God:

*“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,  
“Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.  
“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:9-11).*

Some of the Corinthian believers were formerly fornicators, idolaters, adulterers and homosexuals but they were “washed”, they were “sanctified” and “justified in the name of the Lord Jesus by the Spirit of our God”. Christ made them righteous and qualified them for the Kingdom.

The human condition has not fundamentally changed since then. So has the power of Jesus to transform sinners into saints.

The age-old sin of homosexuality is now spreading like a contagion across the nations of the world. It’s welcomed with open arms by the rulers of this dark world; it’s seen as trendy and glamorous, and there is an ongoing campaign to make it seem normal and acceptable.

But let the world sanitize homosexuality whatever way they wish, if you engage in it, it will disqualify you from the Kingdom of God. I pray that every young man and young woman here will be given the divine grace and power to overcome the temptation and deadly attraction of same-sex relationships.

I shudder to think of the day when our African Hebrew culture will stoop to accommodating same-sex marriage in a formal traditional acknowledgement where family members would gather to perform marital rites for partners of the same gender. It’s a brink from which we need to beat a fast retreat!

But then, it’s a sign of the times. Bible prophecy foretold of the wide acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle – as used to prevail in the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah – in these last days. The Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet Isaiah:

*“Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah” (Isa. 1:9).*

The vile unholy lifestyle of sodomy has had near universal acceptance backed by civil law, but all is not lost! You can be part of the “very small remnant” who stay on the straight and narrow through repentance and faith in Christ. You will be assured of the resurrection.

But what if we denied the resurrection, even though we claim to be believers?

**#The implication got scarier! We are exposed as false witnesses of God by attributing to Him the miracle of Christ’s resurrection when, in fact, He did no such thing (1 Cor. 15:15).**

By extension, we falsely portray God as a fraud in the eyes of the world. Simply because if the doctrine of the resurrection is false, then Christ is definitely not risen (v. 16).

*“And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (v. 17).*

Why? Because it is the resurrection of Christ that testifies that our sins have been forgiven us. Hence Christ could not remain in the grave but had to rise from the dead as proof that the Father has accepted His sacrifice made on our behalf. Accordingly, He cancelled the sentence of death passed against us as sinners. Since Christ died for our sakes, it stands to reason that He would also resurrect in hope of our own resurrection. In Romans 4:25 we read that Christ was “delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification”.

**#Otherwise, all those who have “fallen asleep [died] in Christ are perished” (v. 18).**

That is to say, like the rest of mankind, all true believers who have died will have truly and permanently died (separated God) with no hope of a future resurrection. We merely comforted ourselves singing hymns and quoting scripture in the forlorn hope of a reunion in the distant future yonder shore! Christianity then is a big fraud, only good at spinning hope-filled saccharine stories set in the skies!

**#It makes our Christian hope literally ‘earthbound’:**

*“If in this life only we have hope in Christ. We are of all men most miserable” (v. 19).*

Such a view of the Christian hope implies that any benefits to be derived from following the teachings of Christ, suffering for His sake and devoting ourselves to His cause are only to be received here on earth. There’s no glorious tomorrow. It hands us a miserable fate. We make a huge loss!

For the faithful, devotion to the truth of the gospel comes with a cost – the cost of persecution and numerous sacrifices in time, money and effort. As Bro. Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:11, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”. And for all this persecution and devotion, we have nothing to show for beyond a few miserable years on earth?

That believers must look to a greater promise beyond earthly life exposes the shaky biblical foundations of the so-called ‘Prosperity Gospel’ which has millions of churchgoers held under its spell, believing the gospel of Christ is all about wealth and the good life. But in reality Christianity offers a far grander blessing than any man has ever imagined or deemed possible:

*“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9).*

This was the reason why Christ died and rose again!

**The Resurrection of Christ is the Resurrection of all Saints!**

According to the scriptures of truth, Christ is risen, for so King David prophesied: “Thou will not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption” (Ps. 16:10); and so Apostle Peter affirmed in his Pentecost day sermon (Acts 2:25-27).

That is the unassailable truth:

*“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruit of them that slept” (v. 20).*

Now, how does Christ’s resurrection give hope to the brethren who have departed?

Christ’s resurrection has turned around the course of human destiny:

*“For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead” (v. 21).*

It is only logical that things are arranged this way. Death through one man; resurrection through one man!

- Adam is that man through whom death became the inescapable end of all men:

*“Here is how it works: it was through one individual that sin entered the world, and through sin, death; and in this way death passed through to the whole human race, inasmuch as everyone sinned.*

*“Sin was indeed present in the world before Torah was given, but sin is not counted as such when there is no Torah.*

*“Nevertheless death ruled from Adam until Moshe, even over those whose sinning was not exactly like after Adam’s violation of a direct command. In this, Adam prefigured the one who was to come” (Rom 5:12-14 (JB).*

- Christ is the God-man who reverses the status quo of death by His death and resurrection:

*“But the free gif is not like the offense. For if, because of one man’s offense, many died, then how much more has God’s grace, that is, the gracious gift of one man, Yeshua the Messiah, overflowed to many!*

*“For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we will also be united with Him in a resurrection like His (Rom 5:15; 6:5 (JB; see also 1 Tim. 1:10).*

The profound ways these two personalities have impacted the destiny of man are seen in their opposite lasting legacies to mankind:

*“...as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (v. 22).*

Christ brings about the complete reversal of the fortunes of mankind. He replaces the legacy of death with the legacy of life.

But how will it happen?

The reign of life is guaranteed to dislodge the reign of death, but it is not happening now. There is a timetable for it. Christ is the “firstfruits” or forerunner of the bodily resurrection of the saints and then those who belong to Him – the saints – will likewise experience the Resurrection at His coming:

*“But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming” (v. 23).*

The crucial question is, who are those “who are Christ’s,” a status which qualifies them for the resurrection?

- They are the called-out ones of God who through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ have crucified the flesh:

*“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24).*

- Instead of the lusts of the flesh, they have His laws written in their hearts and minds:

*“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people:*

*“And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest.*

*“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb 8:10-12).*

- Third, those who are Christ’s have His Spirit:

*“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom 8:9).*

The Bible is clear as regards those who belong to God. They are the repentant, Spirit-filled children of God who “keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 12:17).

But when will the mass resurrection of the saints occur?

Near the very end, for “the end” follows hard on the heels of the Resurrection. With the coming of the ‘ultimate end’, however, comes the time when Christ will deliver the Kingdom to the Father God having fought and defeated all its adversaries, putting down “all rule and all authority and power” (v. 24; see Rev. 17:13-14; 11:15).

The suppression of God’s enemies at the last time does not mean Christ is not sovereign now, “For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet” (v. 25; cp. Ps.110:1; Heb. 10:12-13).

So then, He reigns now in our lives as His servants, and He reigns over principalities and powers of darkness wielding authority over them to silence and cast them out (Eph. 1:20-21; Col. 2:9-10; Matt. 10:1; cp. 1 Pet. 3:22)!



Presently, He's seated on the right-hand of God from where He exercises rule over all creation (Heb. 1:2-3). And He's biding His time, at this time of the preaching of the gospel in all nations, to crush the "last enemy", death:

*"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (v. 26).*

Death will soon taste its own death. Christ, the Author of life (Acts 3:15), will end its long reign of terror:

*"And He will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations.*

*"He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it" (Isa. 25:7-8).*

In the meantime, if you will surrender your life to Him, He's ready to let you experience His resurrection power now! He will raise you from the graveyard of sin thereby guaranteeing you a share in the resurrection to come at His coming (Eph. 2:5-7).

If so, our dear brother died in hope, for "the righteous hath hope in his death" (Prov. 14:32). He will rise again! This is because, while He lived, he allowed Christ to raise him from his state of death in sins so that he might put on the holy, righteous image of God in hope of eternal life.

The scriptures testify that "she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (1 Tim. 5:6). So don't continue in death. Believe in the Lord Jesus, repent of your sins and start keeping the commandments of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the best gift you can take away from this bitter-sweet moment of our brother's departure to be with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:6, 8).

This is not the time for revelry or drunkenness. It's the right moment to soberly reflect on your own mortality and eternal destiny hereafter (Eccl. 7:2-4). Now is the decision hour, make the right decision while you still have breath. Christ is risen for you!

Halleluiah!