

ON THE KNIFE EDGE OF HOPE

A Devotional Meditation on SUKKOT (TABERNACLES)

Leviticus 26:11-3; Job 19:23-29; Ecclesiastes 1:9-11, 12:1-14; Ezekiel 37:24-28;
Jonah 2:1-10; 2 Peter 3:1-13; Revelation 21:1-4

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Philosopher George Santayana gave us the memorable observation that, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Santayana may not have known that King Solomon expressed this same observation 3,000 years ago. Solomon said it this way:

What has been is what will be,
and what has been done is what will be done,
and there is nothing new under the sun.
Is there a thing of which it is said,
"See, this is new"?
It has been already
in the ages before us.
There is no remembrance of former things,
nor will there be any remembrance
of later things yet to be
among those who come after.

Ecclesiastes 1:9-11 ESV

Both Solomon and Santayana advocated enjoying life while it lasts, but only Solomon ascribed that enjoyment to the context of living for the Creator. That is why he exhorted his readers to remember the Creator in the days of youth, and to understand that the whole duty of man is to "Fear God and keep his commandments." (Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13–14)

Solomon's conclusion speaks to a hope of something beyond the present life. He can't say exactly what that is, but he does assert with confidence that there is a Creator who is God of both the living and the dead. That confidence speaks to a hope in the Creator such as Job expressed when he said,

For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at the last he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been thus destroyed,
yet in my flesh I shall see God,
whom I shall see for myself,
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.

Job 19:25-26 ESV

Jonah expressed that same hope from the belly of the great fish. His poetic description of the trial he endured because of his own disobedience speaks of the hope that the God who disciplined him even to the point of death would also restore him to life. That moved Jonah to proclaim, "Salvation belongs to the LORD!" (Jonah 2:9)



Photo by Zoran Borojevic, May 17, 2020, [on Unsplash](https://unsplash.com/photos/5GfGfGfGfG).

This hope is solid, but it is as sharp as a knife's edge. It starts with resolve to believe that there is a Creator and goes from there to the conclusion that the Creator is trustworthy. A person who lacks this resolute perspective might fall off the edge or be cut to pieces by it. The evidence of God's existence and handiwork in the affairs of mankind might be all around such a person, but in his uncertainty and doubt he overlooks that evidence or explains it away. This is the type of person Peter described when he wrote:

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

2 Peter 3:1-4 ESV

Peter goes on to write about the workings of God from the beginning of time, and the certainty of his final judgment on unrighteousness. The apostle assures us that the promised resurrection extends not only to our bodies, but to the heavens and the earth themselves. That resurrected creation is where our Creator will dwell among us as he has always intended.

Three witnesses in scripture testify to this glorious hope. The first is Moses, who related this promise from the Lord:

I will make my dwelling among you, and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.

Leviticus 26:11-12 ESV

Ezekiel gives us the second witness in his prophecy about the resurrection and restoration of God's Covenant people of Israel:

My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore.

Ezekiel 37:27-28 ESV

Then there is the witness of John the Revelator, who reported what he saw and heard in his vision of the end of days:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."

Revelation 21:3 ESV

These are solid promises to those who have placed their trust in the Creator. They become even more real as the trials of life provide opportunity to build testimonies of his presence and providence. Yet those same trials can also produce doubt and unbelief even in those who have previously professed trust in the Lord. That's the knife edge of hope: the path is perilous from start to finish, but to those who overcome, there is the promise of life eternal in the presence of our God.