

The Hope of His Appearing

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (Titus 2:13)

"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." (1st Corinthians 15:12-14)

The hope of the resurrection is the cornerstone of the gospel message. As Paul continues on and states,

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (1st Corinthians 15:19)

Every teaching from the pulpit should ultimately point to that great day when our triumphant King will return to take us home to be with Him forevermore. Contrary to many of the false gospels of today, the gospel of Jesus Christ is not a guide to material wealth and prosperity here in this world. The gospel of Jesus Christ has at its core the hope of the "Glory to Come!"

Perhaps it is the perversion of the gospel message that has led some to use the mysteries of the second coming and the resurrection to try and scare people into the pew. Their other tactics have not worked, therefore they have returned back to their old tricks and tried to coerce men into filling their church houses.

The problem I have with this scheme is simple – the gospel (and the resurrection) are not to be a message of fear and warning used to scare people into submission to a particular church or doctrine. The gospel message should be a shout of triumph and victory for the finished work of Jesus Christ and bring comfort to those who feel the weight and damage of sin in their lives.

As Isaiah records,

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins." (Isaiah 40:1-2)

The gospel is for God's people, not the haters of God. And the gospel is not to scare God's people, it is to comfort them with the fact that they are already pardoned and there is no battle left to fight for their eternal salvation. Brethren, "the battle is not ours!" For, instead of justice and condemnation, the elect of God have received mercy and grace.

Having said that, I have a question; if the resurrection and return of Jesus Christ are the very foundation and heart of the gospel, then why should we think the details of it are hidden from our understanding? If God would have us to hope, then why would He hide that truth about our hope?

The answer is simple. The message is not hidden and the truth about it not that hard to find.

Men, in their arrogance and craftiness have turned the book of Revelation from a message that reveals to us the power of the victorious Christ to a convoluted history and prophecy that no one can understand except the precious few who make millions of dollars *explaining* all the signs and wonders to the "unlearned" crowd.

It is my sincere hope to do as Elder Joe Holder said, "to reclaim this wonderful book for the believer."¹ With God's grace and your patience, I pray that we can not only see the clearly revealed message in Revelation, but also invigorate our hope with the message of the second coming found throughout the pages of the Bible.

With this goal in mind, let us return to our verse in Titus chapter 2. We have before us Paul's statement to Titus that says we are "looking for that blessed hope."

What is hope?

The Oxford English Dictionary says that hope is an "expectation of something desired."

If hope is something to be desired, then the return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead ought to be desired and not feared by the children of God.

The definition also says that the thing that is desired is expected to come. This means it's not like a birthday wish where we desire a gift but perhaps with no foundational evidence that we will receive it. We can *expect* the return of Christ because it is a promised **fact!**

Therefore, if the return of Christ and the resurrection is a promised fact that all Christians should desire, then we should do as Paul said and be *looking* for it! This is the exercise of our hope. If we only seek to have temporary comfort here in this life from sickness, poverty, oppressive government, or whatever haunts us day to day, then we have missed the point of the gospel.

The gospel reminds us that our troubles and sufferings here are only temporary. We don't have to look for the weekend to save us from a hard week at work. We all know that the weekend

¹ Joseph R. Holder, *Revelation: Images of Redemptive History* (Lexington, Sovereign Grace Publications, 2004), 3.

ends on Monday anyway. No, we have a true hope. The Lord will return and our troubles will be over permanently.

Hope gives us the proper perspective of those troubles while we struggle in them as well. Paul says,

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18)

When the Lord returns, we will be so raptured by His glory that we will forget all the troubles we suffered. So, *now* we should use the times of trouble to remind us this is not our home. We are only traveling through headed to our long sought home. We are just like those in the “Faith Hall of Fame” in Hebrews 11 who confessed “they were only pilgrims and strangers here on earth.”

With this definition of hope in mind, I offer you the end of my discourse before we have even begun.

The revealed message in Revelation and the whole of Scripture concerning the return of Jesus Christ and the resurrection is - **Jesus wins**.

And since Jesus wins, we are “more than conquerors.” (Romans 8:37)

Having heard the message of sovereign grace and victory, let us seek to thank the Lord with our every breath, word, step, and deed. Remember the words of Peter:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”
(1st Peter 2:9-12)

I will close with these precious lines from an old hymn:

“When Satan comes to tempt our minds,
We’ll meet him with these blessed lines:
Since Christ the Lord has won the field,
We are determined not to yield.”