

THE ABOUNDING JOY OF NEW TESTAMENT HOPE - Part four

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The Objects of Our Hope: The Appearing of Jesus Christ

Titus 2:11-15 - "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, [13] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. [15] Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you."

Please notice there are **two comings** of Jesus mentioned in these 5 verses. One is called the **appearing of grace**, and the other is called the **appearing of glory**. The first coming is described in **verse 11** - "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people...." The second coming is described in **verse 13** - "....waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...."

Notice how inseparably the two comings of Jesus are intertwined in this passage. **Verse 11** talks about Christ's **first coming of grace**. Then **verse 12** talks about the **effects Christ's first coming is to have on my life here and now** - "....training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age...."

Notice also that, in describing Christ's first coming, **verse 14 does exactly the same thing as verse 12** - "....who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."

Then notice that those two verses (**12 and 14**) about the purpose of Christ's **first** coming form a sandwich around **verse 13**, which describes the certainty and hope of Christ's **second** coming - "....waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ...."

Now most of us find it easier to believe in the first coming of Jesus than the second simply because our world has **seen** the first and we've never **seen** the second. The events of the **past** seem more certain than the events of the **future**. But Paul links them so tightly together in this passage for a very important reason - and a very practical one.

Paul knows the weakness of our faith. He knows how we all rely on the use of our physical senses to recognize and affirm reality. That's part of what it is like being physical and being human in this world. For that reason he is labouring to show me that both the **first coming** and the **second coming** of Jesus are united in the **one plan of salvation**. **The same God is behind them both in His sure purpose for mankind**. That's why the Scriptures tie the certainty of the **yet unseen second coming** to the **observable, provable, certainty of the first coming**.

They are tied by the **same God** to the **same plan of salvation**. You just can't take the one. You have to take both parts. The second coming isn't some kind of afterthought or bonus. It's part of the same plan of salvation you and I are already participants in and partakers of.

Paul says the first coming was to **create and teach righteousness** - "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, [12] training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age...."(2:11-12). And he says the **second coming** is to **reward** this self-controlled, upright, godly lifestyle.

And so the blessed hope is a **certain** hope. The same Jesus who came the first time will come again a second time. I can be as certain of the second coming as I am of the first coming. So Paul links the invisible to the observable - the future to the past.

And the Bible doesn't just do this occasionally. It does this repeatedly. Here's another very clear example: **Hebrews 9:27-28** - "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, [28] so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."

What I want to ask you today is this: **Do you eagerly await His coming?** "Those who are **eagerly awaiting for Him**"(Hebrews 9:28) - is that you? And I don't mean, "Do you believe in the **doctrine**?" And I don't mean, "Do you **acknowledge** that Jesus is coming again? I don't even mean, "Do you think you're **going** to heaven instead of hell? I mean

are you eagerly awaiting Him? Is He that precious to you? Are you anxious to see Him in all His majesty and glory? Do you **“love His appearing?”**

Now don't misunderstand me. I'm not out to put false condemnation on anybody. **Nobody** thinks about the second coming all the time. Even though you love Jesus, you don't think about His coming every minute of every day. You don't think about your wife or your husband every minute of the day either. And I assume you love him or her or him.

What I **do** mean is this. Does your mind frequently **return** to the nearness and beauty of His appearing? Is that a natural home and resting place for your thoughts? When you **do** think about His coming, are you **eager** about it? Do you feel you can hardly wait? And then this question - **Do the present concerns and treasures of your life seem small and dull when you think of Jesus' second coming?** That's the really important question. Or are you too involved in this present world to long for a better one? Do you think you'll be **embarrassed** or **confident** when you see Him face to face?

Those are important questions. They point out, at the very least, the spiritual health of your soul. Let's focus on **three truths** Paul outlines about hope for Jesus' second coming in our text: **Titus 2:13** - **“....waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ....”**

1) **THIS HOPE IS A BLESSED HOPE**

“....waiting for the blessed hope...” That word **“blessed”** is such a religious sounding word, it's almost useless in conveying important truth. After being bumped around in slogans and plaques it has no edges left on it. I think Paul has two things in mind when he uses that word:

- a) ***It's a blessed hope because it is the only hope that has eternity in it.*** There are many fine things in this life. But without this **blessed hope** they will all fade away into emptiness and misery: **1 Corinthians 15:19** - **“If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”**

Paul's point is obvious. In an attempt to shock us into thinking this through, he says even **religious aspirations and dreams**, the best of our thoughts and intentions, the finest, most moral works we do, are all meaningless if there isn't hope for eternal life with Jesus Christ.

This is vitally important. It cuts to the heart of the misdirected hope people fall into when it comes to religious faith. There are all sorts of people who **like** Jesus Christ. They like His teaching about love and forgiveness and kindness to others. And they **build their hope** on bringing this Christian ethic to bear on this world's troubles.

But this is still just an **earthly** hope with the moral teaching of Jesus squirted over the top of it. And that's why Paul says **“If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied!”**

Religious hopes that die at the grave are next to useless. Jesus Christ never came just to give the earthly hope of inner peace or self-esteem or humanitarian hearts. All of us need to know that we have a hope that has substance and permanence to it. Something that the ravages of time don't wear out.

Anything less than this is a hollowed out Christianity. Peter captured Christian hope with all it's visceral heat and gusto: **1 Peter 1:3-5** - **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, [5] who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”**

Notice those two important words - **“living hope”**(3). Anything that doesn't outlast the cemetery is not a living hope.

I said Paul had two ideas in mind when he described Christ's second coming as a **“blessed”** hope. Here's the second:

- b) ***It's a blessed hope because it's available for all.***

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 - **“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, [17] comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.”**

The money words are “**good hope through grace**”(16). This is a blessed hope because it needn't be and, in fact, cannot be **earned**. It's a result of the free and eternal grace of an almighty God. In short, it's a blessed hope because it's **within everyone's reach**.

2) THIS HOPE IS A VISIBLE HOPE

Titus 2:13 - “....waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ....”

It is simply stunning to read what some of the theological scholars have written about the second coming of Jesus Christ:

William Neil of the University of Nottingham, wrote in the *Moffatt Commentary on Thessalonians* - “**The Day of the Lord is God's timeless Judgement which is past, present, and future. In a sense it is always to come, in a sense it is always present, and in a sense it has already been passed. Thus the Parousia, or second coming, is, like creation, in a real sense timeless, not an historical event, but the underlying purpose of history....**”

Ernest Best, Professor of Divinity at the University of Glasgow wrote these words - “**We have to conclude that the End is something with which men will never have to reckon in practical terms, again excluding the possible destruction of our own planet, and that it is as wrong to think of a real physical end which God achieves in some public way as it is to think of a real physical beginning.**”

Church, it's almost as though John had these kinds of opinions already in mind when he wrote such strong words to the church about the second coming, the **appearing** of Jesus Christ, at the end of this age:

1 John 3:1-3 - “**See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. [2] Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. [3] And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.**”

I've talked about these precious verses many times. John's whole point seems to be that our final transformation is **dependant** upon our actually **seeing** Jesus when He returns. That's why John is so careful not just to talk about Jesus' **arrival**, but His **appearing**. An **appearing** requires **observers**. One can **arrive** all alone, unnoticed. But if one is to **appear**, he must appear to **someone**.

Make no mistake about it. Our hope is to be fixed on the actual **appearing** of Christ Jesus, our Lord. John says we are going to **see Him**. And if that weren't clear enough, he adds those additional words, “**just as He is.**” You will see Jesus, like it or not. Ready or not. The Bible is crystal clear on this:

Revelation 1:7 - “**Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so [or, 'exactly like this']. Amen.**”

So our hope is a **blessed** hope. It's also a **visible** hope. Finally, our text also says it's a **glorious** hope:

3) OUR HOPE IS A GLORIOUS HOPE

Titus 2:13 - “....waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ....”

I think the coming of Jesus is described as glorious for **two reasons**:

a) **The coming of Jesus is glorious because of the glory of Jesus Christ Himself.**

When we describe Jesus as **glorious** we all immediately agree, but I'm not sure we could as readily say exactly what we **mean**. The frequent use of the terms “**glory**” and “**glorious**” evoke some kind of religious sentiment but sometimes without carrying very much specific content.

Paul helps us in our text. The coming of Jesus is a coming of great glory because it is the coming of **God Himself**. This is obvious right from the words of the text - "**our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.**" When Jesus comes, **God Almighty comes**. We simply have nothing in human history to compare with this event. All other arrivals are small and insignificant when measured by this event. There's no clearer claim to the glory, the majesty, and deity of Jesus Christ than this powerful description. Imagine, the One who made the universe will come to earth.

Whatever pictures struggle to conger up this event, all our imaginings are pathetically small and dull. But we do have at least a small hint in the New Testament of the glory of Jesus Christ. Peter wrote of a brief encounter with the glory of Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. He says he never forgot it, even though he was now about to die:

2 Peter 1:15-19 - "**And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things. [16] For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. [17] For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," [18] we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. [19] And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts...."**

There will be a glory in His coming that this world has never seen before. Peter says it is something that will light up our insides. There will be the heat of a star - a sun - rising up in our souls. The Bible reaches for words just to give us a picture of it:

Revelation 1:13-16 - "**....and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. [14] The hairs of his head were white like wool, as white as snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, [15] his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. [16] In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.**"

Our hope is in this glorious coming of Jesus Christ. And Jesus Christ, God the Son, is filled with glory in His own being. But there's a second reason this hope of Christ's coming is described as glorious:

- b) ***The coming of Jesus is glorious because of the glory it will produce in our own lives.*** John already hinted at this in the verses we read earlier:

1 John 3:1-3 - "**See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. [2] Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. [3] And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.**"

There are actually **two purifying processes** in these verses. **First, we receive power to overcome sin as we fix our minds on Christ's coming** - "**And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure**"(3). And **second, our lives receive total transformation from everything that hindered perfect fellowship and obedience in this life, at the very moment we see Jesus.**

That means there will be a glory to our lives we can only get small tastes of in this life. And that future transformation is linked with the glory of Jesus' Person. It will liberate us from the ever-present temptation to put other things in Christ's place. That threat will be forever removed when we **see** the glory of Jesus Christ physically.

So our hope is a **blessed** hope. It's a **visible** hope. And finally, it's a **glorious** hope. But I couldn't finish this message without saying one more thing. The second coming of Jesus is not only described as a **hope**. It is also a **test**.

4) THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS IS ALSO A TEST

What I mean is, there is nothing like my attitude and preparation for the coming of Jesus to reveal the present spiritual state of my heart. Paul puts it like this:

1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 - **“For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, [10] and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”**

As far as I know, these are the only **two ways of knowing you're saved** in the teaching of the New Testament:

First, you immediately turn from the previous loves of your heart. In other words, conversion doesn't just **add** to what used to be your life. It **replaces** what used to be of your life - **“...how you turned to God from idols...”** There's a **to** and a **from** in conversion. And you can't turn **to** without turning **from**. The idols are what your life used to worship and give admiration and attention and time to. But conversion turns you **from** those things. I take that to mean my life used to **face** all those things. Now that I've turned **to** God, my **back** faces those things.

Second, Paul says true conversion immediately burns the reality of the second coming of Jesus into your heart. Paul says that immediately the Christian starts to **“wait for His Son from heaven”(10)**.

But let me explain something very important about this **waiting**. I don't think Paul means I am all heavenly minded and no earthly good. He doesn't mean I just sit around looking up at the sky, daydreaming about the second coming of Jesus Christ. No. I think he means I wait for God the Son from heaven in the sense that His appearing becomes the **motive** for everything else I do.

And it's very easy to forget about this motivation. But we mustn't. We mustn't because it is **this** motivation that makes Christian service **Christian** at all. So Reni and I support several children through Child Care Plus. And it's very easy to do this because we want to be kind and we receive letters from them and have their pictures - faces smiling. And I'm telling you right now, as wonderful as those things are, they aren't **why** we do it.

We do it because we're **waiting for God the Son from heaven**. This is the difference between just **giving a cup of cold water** (which is done every day by atheists and agnostics alike) and **giving a cup of cold water “in Jesus' Name.”** We do what we do, not primarily for a child's smile, but for the blessed return of the One who redeemed us and called us into His service.

This is just one example of what Paul means by **“waiting for His Son from heaven”(10)**. In everything we do, we aren't just **moral** or **philanthropic**. We are anticipating Christ's presence. We are preparing our hearts for Him. It's why we go to church regularly and frequently. It's not to **earn** a place in heaven. It's because we're waiting for His return. This is why we budget our money differently than people who aren't even **thinking** about Jesus' return. We know there's limited time. We want our Savior's smile for sinners found and redeemed.

Test your heart with these truths today.