

The Blessed Hope

Looking Up

Detractors of Christianity have done a great disservice to the church – often they characterise our faith as a ‘pie-in-the-sky religion’, one so focused on the life to come that it produces people who do nothing about injustice in the here and now – and they charge that believers are “so heavenly minded” so as to be “no earthly good”.

This is simply a caricature of the church, for believers are concerned about the past and the present; and the history of the church proves this beyond doubt. But such false criticism has had the impact of causing much of the church to lose its upward look, its expectancy of her Lord coming again.

The focus on the ‘here and now’, even in the rightful desire to spread the gospel, must not rob us of our blessed hope.

The Biblical Injunction of Expectancy

Paul, in his letter to Titus gives the right balance:

*‘For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, **looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ**, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.’*

Titus 2: 11-14

Paul speaks of our present focus – the gospel of salvation, living righteously in a world of lusts and ungodliness, and being zealous to do good works for our Lord

Paul speaks of our upward focus – of Yeshua’s purifying of His bride, and of His bride’s upward look and expectancy for the coming of the bridegroom.

He calls this ‘the blessed hope’ – because in this world we have no hope, no life, no salvation, no redemption, and no future.

Paul reminds Titus, and us – our hope is in the Lord alone, our life and salvation are in the Lord alone, our future is in Him and with Him. Therefore we must not lose our focus on His ‘glorious appearing’, we must be upward looking and expectant.

Blesséd

The coming of the Lord is ‘the blessed hope’ – it is the most blessed of all our hopes.

The word ‘blessed’ in *Titus 2: 13* is the Greek word ‘*makarios*’, meaning supremely blest (by extension, fortunate), well off, blessed, happy.

Hope

The coming of the Lord is ‘the blessed hope’ – it is the hope above all hopes. The word ‘hope’ in *Titus 2:13* is the Greek word ‘*elpis*’, meaning to anticipate (usually with pleasure), expectation (abstract or concrete), or confidence; it is a hope of faith.

Appearing

In the New Testament we find three Greek words referring to Yeshua's second coming – they are 'parousia', 'apokalupsis', and 'epiphaneia'. In Titus 2: 13 it is the Greek word 'epiphaneia', meaning a manifestation, appearing, or brightness. It is, specifically, the advent of Yeshua, both past and future.

The Lord's 'Coming Again' in Scripture

Are there other scriptures that express this great desire to see the Lord's return? There certainly are!

*I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, **eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ**, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.'* **1 Corinthians 1: 4-8**

The Greek word translated 'revelation' is 'apokalupsis', meaning revelation or appearing, unveiling, coming, or manifestation – the same word as in the title of the book of Revelation.

*'Finally, there is laid up for me **the crown of righteousness**, which **the Lord**, the righteous Judge, **will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.**'* **2 Timothy 4: 8**

The Greek word translated 'appearing' is 'epiphaneia' as in Titus 2: 13.

*'For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when **we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ**, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.'* **2 Peter 1: 16**

Peter is speaking of Yeshua's first advent – and the word translated as 'coming' is the Greek word 'parousia', meaning a being near, that is, advent (often, return); (by implication) a physical aspect, coming, or presence.

*'For our **citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour**, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.'*

Philippians 3: 20-21

The Greek word translated 'eagerly await' is 'apekdechomai', meaning to expect fully, or to look or wait for.

Note in all these scriptures the upward looking focus and the expectancy and longing with eagerness.

So we too eagerly await our Saviour; we long for, and look forward to His return. It is the blessed hope! And not only for us, but all of creation waits in eager expectation too (*Romans 8:19*).

Why We Should Eagerly Await the Lord's Coming – Eight Reasons!

1. We Will Meet and See Yeshua Face to Face!

Just as it was in the beginning (*Genesis 3: 8*) – but this time...no need to hide!

*'And they heard the sound of **the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.**'*

Genesis 3: 8

Just as it was for Moses – face to face with the Lord (*Exodus 33: 11*)

*'So **the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.** And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.'*

Exodus 33: 11

What we have now is, by comparison, but a poor reflection (*1 Corinthians 13: 12*)

*'For **now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face.** Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.'*

1 Corinthians 13: 12

Right from the creation of the world it was always God's intention that He would dwell and live with His creation. He has never wanted separation from His creation. The 'mystery of God' will be finished, for we will see Him and know Him face to face – and we will truly know Him, and each other, in a new wonderful way.

2. We Will Be With Yeshua Forevermore!

God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) will dwell with us – we shall be His people and He will be our God – forevermore (*Revelation 21: 3-4*)

*'And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, **the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.** And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for **the former things have passed away.**"'*

Revelation 21: 3-4

When He Comes We shall Always be With the Lord (*1 Thessalonians 4: 17-18*)

*'Then **we who are alive and remain shall be caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And **thus we shall always be with the Lord.** Therefore **comfort one another with these words.**'*

1 Thessalonians 4: 17-18

Finally, after all the years, when Yeshua returns we will stand (or more likely fall) before the Lord of Glory, our Saviour, our Redeemer, our Lord, and our Friend. We will be His Bride – at the moment we are His betrothed – but then we shall be His beloved, pure and holy bride. We will never be separated from Him – so we are to encourage each other with these words.

3. We will Have a New Body!

Our human bodies, though wonderfully made, are part of the fallen and decaying creation (*Psalms 139: 13-14*); we are dust (*Ecclesiastes 3: 20*).

*'For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. **I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made**; marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well.'*

Psalm 139: 13-14

*'All go to one place: **all are from the dust, and all return to dust.**'* **Ecclesiastes 3: 20**

God has planned something far better still to come. When Jesus stood on the Mount 'He was transfigured before them; His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light (Matthew 17: 2). Well we too, as believers, will be transformed (Philippians 3: 20-21).

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Matthew 17: 2

*'For our **citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body**, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.'*

Philippians 3: 20-21

Our new bodies will be of different and a greater splendour than our human bodies - transformed (1 Corinthians 15: 41-44) – from corruption to incorruption, from dishonour to glory, from weakness to power, from natural to spiritual

*'There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; **for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.**'*

1 Corinthians 15: 41-44

We shall be changed – to being imperishable and immortal (1 Corinthians 15: 51-53)

*'Behold, I tell you a mystery: **We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed** – in a moment, **in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet**. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For **this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.**'*

1 Corinthians 15: 51-53

Our new bodies will not get tired or deteriorate no more illness, no more pain; the majesty and beauty of what is coming will blow us away. We will have a body that is totally suited to our new eternal home, just as this body is created and suited for our temporal earthly existence.

4. We will Get a New Nature!

Free from 'the Flesh' and our Old Nature (Romans 7: 18-19) – delivered from our 'body of death' by the Lord (Romans 7: 24-25) – we wait, with perseverance, for the redemption of our body (Romans 8: 23-25).

*'For I know that **in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells**; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.'*

Romans 7: 18-19

*'O wretched man that I am! **Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!**'*

Romans 7: 24-25

‘Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.’
Romans 8: 23-25

When Yeshua returns, we will actually be like him – no more old nature bringing us down; we will be changed into his likeness.

We shall indeed be like Yeshua – free of sin in a glorified body (1 John 3: 2)
‘Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’
1 John 3: 2

A new life, a new body – when He appears (Colossians 3: 4) – for He is our life!
‘When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.’
Colossians 3: 4

When it says that we will appear with Christ 'in glory' it is speaking of the nature and character of God.

This is the 'glory' that Yeshua in us gives us – hope of future glory (Colossians 1: 27) – it's not our glory...for we are but partakers in the 'divine nature' (2 Peter 1: 3-4) through the gift of the Holy Spirit and one day, when we receive a body like His body, we shall be like Him and display that very nature of God completely without the hindrances and earthly downward drag of our current fallen nature.

‘To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.’
Colossians 1: 27

‘...His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.’
2 Peter 1: 3-4

5. We will be United with Those that have Gone Before Us

The scriptures assure us that the coming of the Lord will bring a great reunion with those that have previously gone to be with the Lord – and we will be caught up together! (1 Thessalonians 4: 15-17)

‘For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.’
1 Thessalonians 4: 15-17

Think for a moment of those that you know that have already gone to be with the Lord. Maybe it is a parent, or even a child, or maybe a good friend that you long to see again. Can you imagine the joyous reunion that will take place when we see them again? All of us together, with new bodies and a new nature – a joyful reunion!

6. We will have A New Home, Our True Home!

Our true home is not here on this earth; it is the heavenly New Jerusalem. It has been longed for as far back as Abraham who looked for the city whose foundations are from God (*Hebrews 11: 9-10*).

'By faith he [Abraham] dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' **Hebrews 11: 9-10**

Those who are born of the Spirit (born from above) are not of this world (*John 15: 19*) and our citizenship is in heaven (*Philippians 3: 20*).

'If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.' **John 15: 19**

'For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,' **Philippians 3: 20**

The more we experience of these dark days in the end times, the more we long for our heavenly home and to be with our Lord; there is no place like home ... and it is true for us...we don't belong in this darkness.

Yeshua has prepared a place for us (*John 14: 1-3*).

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also." **John 14: 1-3**

Scripture gives us a glimpse of this new home in the book of Revelation (chapters 21 and 22), but of course it is hard to explain the heavenly in earthly descriptions. It is so marvellous, this new dwelling place, that John can only describe it in terms of jewels (*Revelation 21: 9-11*).

'Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.'

Revelation 21: 9-11

It is glorious and full of light (*Revelation 21: 23*) and we will live in the presence of our Heavenly Father and of our Lord forevermore (*Revelation 22: 3-5*).

'The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.' **Revelation 21: 23**

'And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: they need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.' **Revelation 22: 3-5**

The light and beauty of our eternal home, the New Jerusalem, is in stark contrast to our dark and tainted earthly home.

7. We will experience Unrelenting Joy... and Peace... and Love... and More...!

This is in some ways a hard one to comprehend, for it sounds too good to be true! The scriptures tell us that in God's presence is fullness of joy and pleasures forever more. Yes, 'fullness of joy' and 'forever more' (*Psalm 16: 11 and 17: 15*). I like that. I like the two of them together even more - 'fullness of joy' and 'forevermore'.

'You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.'
Psalm 16: 11

'As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.'
Psalm 17: 15

The word 'satisfied' in the Hebrew means 'to be filled, to be full.' The true nature and character of God contains all love, all grace, all mercy, all goodness, all peace, all joy... and we shall be 'filled to the full' on that day.

Imagine being truly saturated with the love and acceptance of God? Imagine being immersed in the joy of the Lord! Imagine the peace, contentment that will be ours because of Him! Imagine every thought automatically being to the glory of God!

8. We will have a most amazing Eternal Life of Praise and Service!

Our Blessed Hope is the start of an amazing future with one who is the most creative and incredible person in the universe – The Lord Jesus. The one who made all things and upholds all things, is going to make all things new!

We will spend eternity in praise of Him (*Revelation 5: 9-10, 13-14*).

'And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."
Revelation 5: 9-10

'And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honour and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!" Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.'
Revelation 5: 13-14

We will return with the Lord when He comes to rule and reign, at the beginning of the Millennium (*Revelation 19: 11-14*).

'Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.'
Revelation 19: 11-14

We will serve our Lord and King – a reward for faithfulness in this life – serving in the joy of the Lord (*Matthew 25: 23*).

'His lord said to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."
Matthew 25: 23

All things will be made anew - if you thought that this creation was wonderful then wait and see what He does in the new creation! (*Revelation 21: 1-5*)

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." **Revelation 21: 1-5**

This is a far cry from that stupid man-made thought of sitting on clouds strumming harps. It is joy forevermore, worship forevermore, life in the presence of the Father and with our Lord and Saviour forevermore!

A Blesséd Hope indeed!

We Shall Not All Sleep, But We Shall All Be Changed

Maranatha, Come Lord Yeshua Come.