

# 'Looking For That Blessed Hope'

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One of the greatest prospects we have as the Lord's people is the promise of Christ's personal return to earth for His church. Following His resurrection the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mt of Olives, near Bethany, where He 'was taken' into the clouds. We may suppose being 'taken' means the Saviour was bodily conveyed by angels, the chariot and horses of the Lord, into His Father's presence where He now is seated in glory.

## **In like manner**

As the Lord disappeared from sight two men in white, again, likely angels, addressed the disciples saying, 'this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven' (cf. Psalm 47:5). By this testimony we understand that Jesus Christ will someday appear again in the clouds.

He will return as He departed in the same human flesh and with the same human nature, yet full of glory. He will descend to the earth in person as He once ascended in person. 'He will descend with a shout', says Paul, 'with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God' (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

## **We shall see Him face to face**

It is the 'blessed hope' of every believer that soon we shall see Jesus as He is, face to face, in all His glory, and in seeing Him that we shall be like Him. John tells us, 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

Again, 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world' (1 John 4:17). Gone will be our aches and pains, sicknesses and weariness, trials and tears. Gone will be our sinful nature and troubled hearts. We shall be welcomed into our eternal glory, there to dwell with our blessed Lord and Saviour.

## **A motivating hope**

Paul delights in the theme of the Saviour's return as he writes to his young

preacher-friend Titus. For Paul the great promises of grace and glory revealed in the gospel of God motivate God's people to service and holy living.

It is the gospel that teaches the church to deny 'ungodliness and worldly lusts', to 'live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world'. Grace, not law, is what regulates and rules the believer's life and 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation' teaches us to look forward in eager anticipation for the return of Christ, our great God.

### **An assuring hope**

Christ's church and people are daily, 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour', Jesus Christ. The blessedness, or happiness, of our hope rests in no small measure upon confidence borne of faith, that we are completely and perfectly ready for Him when He comes.

There could be no present blessedness if we were not presently prepared to meet our God. And since it is the church that has this blessed hope then all the church must be perfect and complete for His return.

### **Christ's covenant work**

We know our perfection is not in ourselves, yet we believe it is real, just the same. It is the perfect holiness of thorough justification. The making of His people righteous is accomplished fully and gifted freely by the Lord Jesus to all God's elect. This was our Saviour's covenant work, the work He finished on the cross. He has taken away the sin of all for whom He died. He has imputed His righteousness to us, heart and soul, He created us anew, filled us with His Spirit. He is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Let this be emphasised to every believer. We are a new creation which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 2:10; 4:24). Let this gospel standing, these benefits of adoption into the family of God be preached and believed for the comfort of our souls. If any sin remains on our conscience, unwashed by the blood of Christ, the enthusiasm of our hope must be diminished in this world and our expectation of Christ's coming cannot properly be called blessed.

### **Complete in Him**

Christ is not coming to make us righteous, righteous and holy is what we now are in Him. Our Lord Jesus Christ is coming for those who are complete in Him (Colossians 2:10). Certainly, we cannot now claim this in our flesh but neither can we deny it in the new man, what Peter calls 'the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible' (1 Peter 3:4). At His appearance these bodies will be changed and we shall have a new body

like unto His body.

### **‘Only believe’**

Nevertheless, we are clean, right now in our spirits before God, ‘holy and without blame before Him in love’. To deny this is to deny the success of Christ’s death and the sufficiency of His blood to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. To doubt it is to give place to the devil’s temptation.

Christ’s church is completely pure and clean by the cleansing blood He shed to ransom our souls. Our confidence is warranted by faith. Our assurance is justified by the resurrection of our Saviour from the dead. Every child of God, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, justified by the blood and righteousness of Christ, is as really and truly saved now by Christ, as is the Church in heaven.

### **The last, lost soul**

Here is a final thought. The churches’ numerical completeness is also in view as we anticipate that blessed hope. By the time of Christ’s coming every elect child of God will be called and converted, quickened and renewed by the Spirit of God and the preaching of truth. This is a great motivation to preach the gospel. We preach for the salvation of sinners and we preach to hasten on the ‘glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour’. Let us be found looking for that blessed hope every time the gospel is preached.

Somewhere, someday, under the preaching of God’s free grace a single soul will be converted and the church of God, ‘the great congregation’ will be entire. What we look for in Christ’s appearing is the glorious realisation of every divine promise and the fulfilment of every blessed hope. Christ’s church has grounds for present joy as we anticipate our eternal life and personal, intimate enjoyment of Christ’s glory, seated together with Him in heavenly places.

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