



TITUS 2 AND THE RAPTURE

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Godly living—according to Scripture—necessitates that the church maintain wise attitudes toward the world in which we live, specifically with regard to the *temporal* values of the world, in contrast to the *eternal* values of our faith in God and His holy Word. For instance, as a reason for the teaching concerning moral obligations, such as the moral duty of a slave to not steal from his master (2:10), we find attention upon “the grace of God [that] has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,” a reference that concerns the first coming of Jesus Christ. The grace of God is here conceived as a dynamic that manifests itself in Christian ethical obedience, and not merely the forgiveness of sins. One evidence of godly living is awaiting the “blessed hope” (2:11-14).

In Titus 2:13, the Greek text uses the definite article “the” to introduce both “blessed hope” and “glorious appearing,” which suggests one event from two aspects. The blessed hope is the glorious appearing of our God and Savior. Moreover, the appearing and the glory is of one Person, our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.



AWAITING THE “BLESSED HOPE”

The exhortation to await the blessed hope is stated in the words that nearly conclude the sentence (begun in verse 11), which is “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (2:13). As the Greek verb translated “looking for” is in the present tense, it signifies a characteristic attitude; that is, the church is always ready to meet the returning Lord. It is in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 that it is clear that this “blessed hope” is indeed what is called the rapture: the translation of living church saints and resurrection of dead church saints, and joining of both parties in the clouds to meet Christ in the air. The concept of the imminent coming of Christ may only be harmonized with the belief that Christ will rapture His church prior to the seventieth week of Daniel 9, or what is more commonly termed “the tribulation” of seven years length. (It is odd that some individu-

als may regard the doctrine of the rapture as too supernatural; however, to correct such a mentality, it would be best to review Old Testament history, in addition to the history of the Gospels and the early church.)

The teaching of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is that “we who are alive and remain”—in contrast to “those who have fallen asleep in Jesus”—always have the hope of instantaneous translation into the presence of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, without intervening death and separation from the body. Of course, the same hope of receiving a new body ultimately and seeing and being with Christ in the meantime prevails for those Christians who die before that time. The hope of this translation, which is not merely desired but what is assured, is to affect the manner in which you and I live our lives in awaiting the blessed hope, because we are to have a continual expectation of its occurring even today. When it does occur, we

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may be certain that our Lord wants us to be doing something that is honoring to Him whom we will suddenly greet. We do not want to feel ashamed when we meet our Lord and Savior face to face (1 John 2:28; 3:3).

In Titus 2:13, the Greek text uses the definite article “the” to introduce both “blessed hope” and glorious appearing” (*tēn makarian elpida kai epiphaneian tēs doxēs*). Only one article (*tēn*) closely unites the two substantives, which suggests that the reference is regarding one event from two aspects. The blessed hope is the glorious appearing of our God and Savior. Moreover, the appearing and the glory is of one Person, our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Most students of New Testament Greek are familiar with the Granville Sharp Rule. Stated simply, the rule is that when two nouns of the same case, which are not proper names (e.g. Titus) and are describing a person, and the two nouns of the same case are connected by the conjunction “and” (*kai*), if the first noun has the definite article (“the”) and the second does not, then both nouns refer to the same person. In Titus 2:13, this is demonstrated by the words “God” and “Savior.” (The King James Version was translated before Sharp’s rule was written late in the eighteenth century, and therefore regrettably, is probably not quite as clear in translation, for it reads: “glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”) However, the article is used with respect to God, and followed by the conjunction “and,” and the word “Savior” does not have the article. Therefore, both nouns are being applied to the same person, Jesus Christ. The phrase “great God” is an application of an Old Testament description for the Savior. To conclude otherwise would not be based upon Scripture but upon theological presuppositions.

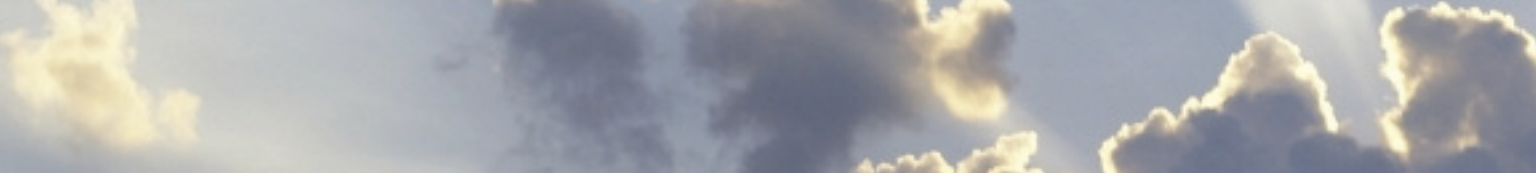
Jesus Christ is our great God and Savior (the same phrase was often used in the papyri and by the Greek Fathers as referring to Christ Jesus).

Paul described the “appearing of the glory” of one person, that is, “our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” The identification of the Lord Jesus by the phrase “great God” is certainly the thought of the context, because it was the Lord Jesus who gave Himself for the redemption of the believer. Therefore, with this hope in the mind of his readers, the Apostle Paul reminded believers in verse 14 that the Lord Jesus Christ we will meet someday is the one who redeemed us from all wickedness for the intent of purifying a people of his own who are “zealous for good deeds” (an expression appearing several times in this letter to Titus).

THE APPEARING OF THE GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Greek word translated “appearing” is *epiphaneian* (ἐπιφάνειαν), and is used in three different New Testament contexts. The *first* context is 2 Timothy 1:10 (“but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”). The “appearing” in 2 Timothy 1:10 is in reference to the Lord’s first coming. The *second* context is identified in 1 Timothy 6:14 and Titus 2:13. First Timothy 6:14 reads, “that you keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The “appearing” in 1 Timothy 6:14 and Titus 2:13 is in reference to the pretribulational rapture. The *third* context is 2 Thessalonians 2:8 (“Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming”). The “appearance” in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 is in reference to the Lord’s premillennial reign.

With regard to the second context, the Greek word translated “appearing” is followed by a descriptive genitive, *tēs doxēs* (τῆς δόξης), “of the glory.” The descriptive genitive may be trans-



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lated occasionally as an adjective, which would be read as "glorious" in Titus 2:13. The Granville Sharp Rule, which again states that when two nouns of the same case, which are not proper names and are describing a person, and the two nouns of the same case are connected by the copulative "and" (*kai*), if the first noun has the definite article ("the") and the second does not, then both nouns refer to the same person. Therefore, things that are more or less distinct are regarded as one for the immediate purpose, which is reason for the use of only one definite article ("the").

In Titus 2:13, this would mean that "the blessed hope" is the "glorious appearing." The definite article then is explanatory, and introduces the more distinct definition of the character for the blessed hope. Christians are "looking for" the person of hope, our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who is the glorious appearing. The reference is to one event (the rapture), which is emphasized by two aspects: anticipation and appearing.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE BLESSED HOPE

The imminence of the Lord's return means that He could return at any moment; it is a sudden coming. The rapture may occur today, perhaps tomorrow, or even years from now, but one does not know when Christ will rapture the church. One prevalent danger with regard to the rapture is to mock this imminency of the Lord's gathering of the church (cf. 2 Pet 3:3-4). There are no specific events that must occur prior to the rapture; rather, there is only the instruction for the believer to be ready. The church is not instructed to await the blessed hope of Antichrist; it is the blessed hope of Jesus Christ that the church anticipates. If any events must precede the rapture, it is impossible not to seek those signs



as opposed to the Lord's coming, which would, of course, encourage only a general interest in the blessed hope. The doctrine of imminence in relation to the rapture teaches that other things may occur prior to Christ's removal of the church, but nothing else must occur before His return. If some event must occur prior to the rapture, it would be a component of the Christian's hope because then one would know assuredly when Christ will return, but such an event would contradict the concept of imminency.

Those who attempt to determine dates for the Lord's return, foolishly ignore the fact that no time must transpire before the rapture. If time must transpire, then the event is not imminent. Some will argue for Christ's "soon" coming, yet neglect the fact that if an event is soon, it must occur within a short period of time. It would be better to understand "soon" adverbs to indicate the manner of the Lord's return, not time. When the Lord returns, it will be swiftly and quickly. The fact that Christ could return for His church at any moment is taught throughout the New Testament (1 Cor 1:7; 16:22; Phil 3:20; 4:5; 1 Thess 1:10; Heb 9:28; Jas 5:7-9; 1 Pet 1:13;

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Jude 21; Rev 3:11; 22:7, 12, 17, 20); therefore, only a coming of Christ pretribulationally can be consistently and literally taught from the entirety of Scripture. The pretribulation teaching of the Lord's return is the only manner in which one can honestly assert that Christ could return at any moment, because this doctrine alone teaches that the Lord will rapture the church prior to the seventieth week of Daniel 9 or any tribulational events occurring. Therefore, nothing must occur before His return for the church.

The blessed hope of the church is the appearing in glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, at the rapture. The doctrine of the rapture should motivate the church to pursue godly living by God's grace, and therefore, to glorify God in this present life. The present tense of the verb *prosdechomenoi* (προσδεχόμενοι), which is translated "looking for," indicates that anticipation of the Lord's return should be the characteristic attitude of the church. The "looking" is a continual process of being always ready to welcome the appearing Lord. The Greek verb *paideuousa* (παιδεύουσα), which is translated "instructing" in verse 12, was also in the present tense. Therefore, the two participles function harmoniously. It is because "the grace of God has appeared" (2:11) that believers are instructed

"to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age" (2:12), as we are "looking for the blessed hope" (2:13). The expectation is a continual attitude that affects one's life in the "looking for" the Lord's return.

One reason for this continual expectation is "so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming" (1 John 2:28). "And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (3:3). The blessed hope of the Lord's return is not merely an event that is anticipated, but is a promise that gives assurance to the church; it is a joyous promise of anticipation.

There should never be doubt with regard to the anticipation; the rapture will occur, and belief in this doctrine results in a joyousness that is looking forward to the ultimate redemption.

CONCLUSION

The church has a blessed hope of the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus. The imminency of the rapture is evident in that the Apostle Paul and the first century recipients of the Epistle to Titus anticipated the possibility of this event. Of course, all believers may join in the blessed anticipation of the Lord's return. Verse 12 stresses godly, righteous, and sensible living "in the present age" in relation to the anticipation of the glorious appearing. Doctrine is certainly necessary for living godly. Verse 11 introduced the first coming of the Lord ("the grace of God has appeared"), and related this doctrine to living godly (2:12). Christians are to pursue holy living based upon the doctrine of the Lord's return for the church at the pretribulation rapture (2:13), and understanding that the purpose of the Lord's redemption was to "purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds" (2:14). (415)