



Why Talk About the Blessed Hope?

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There is an essential element of Christian doctrine being denied or ignored by many today. It is the doctrine of the Blessed Hope. The Blessed Hope refers to the catching away of Believers before the Tribulation. This doctrine is enjoined upon Christians in Titus 2:13, where Paul writes, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

I say enjoined because the blessed hope in verse 13 appears as a clause in a much longer sentence that runs from verse 11 through verse 14, as it appears in the King James Bible:

¹¹For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, ¹²Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; ¹³Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; ¹⁴Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

In fact, the whole sentence appears as a part of a larger passage, that begins in chapter one, where Paul instructs Titus on what to teach Believers about how they should conduct themselves. He begins with bishops, or pastors, in chapter one and then in chapter two he moves on to aged men, aged women, young women, young men, and then servants. Then, Paul gives Titus further instructions on what he is to teach all Believers to do in the passage quoted above.

So, let's break this passage down a bit. In verse 11, Paul begins by telling Titus, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men..." Consequently, we ought to learn to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." However, the sentence does not stop there. Paul continues to instruct Titus that, because God's grace that brings salvation has appeared to us, we should be "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Now this is an important point. Many pastors do not like to study or to preach and teach on end times Bible prophecy. They give a variety of reasons for why they do not such as, "I would

rather focus on what is happening right now,” “It is too divisive,” or “It is a distraction from the gospel.” Often times the real reason is more along the lines of, “It is too confusing and I do not understand it myself so I will just ignore it and hope nobody brings it up.”

Failing to preach and teach on end times Bible prophecy, however, runs contrary to Paul’s command in Titus 2:13 to that we should be “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” It also runs afoul of Paul’s command in 1 Thessalonians 5:6 that we should “watch and be sober.”

In fact, let’s take a look at the larger passage dealing with end times Bible prophecy in 1 Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Paul writes:

¹³But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

In this passage, Paul is teaching about end times Bible prophecy, specifically, the Blessed Hope, or as he puts it in verse 17, the catching away of Believers. We call this event the Rapture. Rapture comes from the phrase, “caught up,” which is translated from the Greek word, *harpazo*. The Latin Vulgate translated *harpazo* into Latin as *rapiemur*. Some other Latin translations used *rapturo* or *raptus*, both forms of the verb *rapiemur* as well. These Latin words are the basis of our English word rapt, which means to be totally engrossed or caught up in something. The suffix *-ure* is often added to words of Latin origin to indicate an act, process, or result. Hence, rapture (rapt+ure) being used to indicate the act of being totally caught up, as in the act of Believers being “caught up together... to meet the Lord in the air”. Hence, the Rapture.

Consequently, in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 we can learn two things that tell us that Paul expected the Thessalonians to study end times Bible prophecy, and, by extension, us too. First, is that Paul did not want them to be ignorant of future events, especially in regards to the Rapture. And second, Paul expected the Thessalonians to be comforted and encouraged by knowing what God was planning for the future. These two alone are more than enough reason to study end times Bible prophecy. And more than enough reason for Paul to refer to the Rapture as the Blessed Hope in Titus 2:13.

Moving into 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Paul gives us more reasons to study end times Bible prophecy:

¹But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. ²For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. ³For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. ⁴But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. ⁵Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. ⁶Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. ⁷For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. ⁸But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope

of salvation. ⁹For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. ¹¹Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

In verse 2 Paul says, “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” This strongly implies that Paul had spent time previously teaching and preaching to them on end times Bible prophecy and that he expected them to build on his previous instruction with the teaching about the Rapture contained in this letter to them. In fact, he goes on to say in verse 4 that they “are not in darkness” and so should not be taken unawares or unexpectedly as when a thief breaks in in the night. Instead, he says in verse 6, “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” And, finally, in verse 11, he enjoins us to comfort ourselves “together” and to “edify one another.”

All these things show us that we are indeed to study end times Bible prophecy and in particular the Rapture. We are not to be ignorant but to be sober minded, watching and waiting for the time when we will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. We may not know the day and hour of the Rapture but Paul implies that we can know the season, but only if we take the time to study end times Bible prophecy. And as we study it, we are to teach and preach on it in order to encourage, comfort, and edify others, especially as we see the day approaching.

With this in mind, notice Hebrews 10:23-25:

²³Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) ²⁴And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: ²⁵Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Notice how the Bible gives us four things in this passage that we are to do:

1. Hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;
2. Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works;
3. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together; and
4. Exhort one another.

Then Paul concludes by saying, “and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” Now why would Paul say that if he did not expect us to study and to teach and preach on end times Bible prophecy? We have to be watching, we have to be waiting, we have to be awake and sober minded, studying end times Bible prophecy in order to see the day approaching.

So, why talk about the Blessed Hope? Well, it is clear from these passages that we are compelled by the Scriptures to study and to teach and preach on end times Bible prophecy. Besides, knowing what God’s plans are in advance is a tremendous source of encouragement and comfort as we get closer and closer to the Lord’s return. Especially in light of Paul’s statements in 2 Timothy 3:1 and 13 where he warned, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come... But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” Knowing that God plans to remove Believers before things get even worse during the Tribulation is truly our Blessed Hope.

Failure to study and to teach and preach on end times Bible prophecy is disobedience to God and robs us of our Blessed Hope.