

Jesus could come at any time. That hope becomes a transforming reality in this life, resulting in God being Glorified through us (1 Corinthians 10:31) "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the Glory of God." The blessed hope brings us joy and cheers us through the trials of this world. It should also cause us to stop and evaluate our thinking, words, and actions.

"How Are We To Live Our Lives In Light Of Christ's Return?"

We believe that the return of Jesus Christ is imminent, that is, His return could occur at any moment. We, with the Apostle Paul, look for **"The blessed hope—the Glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ"** (Titus 2:13). Knowing that the Lord could come back today, some are tempted to stop what they are doing and just "wait" for Him. However, there is a big difference between knowing that Jesus "could" return today and knowing that He "will" return today. Jesus said, "No one knows about that day or hour" (Matthew 24:36). The time of His coming is something God has not revealed to anyone, and so, until He calls us to Himself, we should continue serving Him. In Jesus' parable of the ten talents, the departing king instructs his servants to "occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13) He summoned ten of his slaves, and gave them ten pounds, and said to them, 'Do business with these until I come back.'

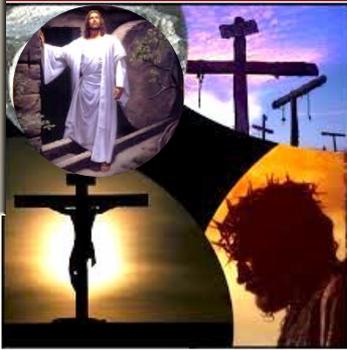
"We Work While We Can"



The return of Christ is always presented in Scripture as a great motivation to action, not as a reason to cease from action. In 1 Corinthians 15:58, Paul wraps up his teaching on



Christ's Coming by saying, "Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord." In 1 Thessalonians 5:6, Paul concludes a lesson on Christ's Coming with these words: "So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled." To retreat and "hold the fort" was never Jesus' intention for us. Instead, we work while we can. "Night is coming, when no one can work" (John 9:4). The Apostles lived and served with the idea that Jesus could return within their lifetime; what if they had ceased from their labors and just "waited"? They would have been in disobedience to Christ's command to "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation" (Mark 16:15), and the Gospel would not have been spread. The Apostles understood that Jesus' imminent return meant they must busy themselves with God's work. They lived life to the fullest, as if every day were their last. We, too, should view every day as a gift and use it to Glorify God.



The center of Christianity is the coming of the Son of God into the world as a real man to destroy the works of the devil and create a new people for His Own Glory. The very heart of our faith is that He did this by obeying the law of God, dying for the sins of His people, rising victorious over death, ascending to God's right hand with all His enemies under His feet. The Second Coming of Christ is the completion of His saving work. If you take it away, the whole

fabric of His saving work unravels. Consider! A physical incarnation of the Son of God. A physical death. A physical resurrection. A physical ascension. And then poof! Vanish! Never to be seen on earth again. You can see what is really behind this denial of a real Second Coming — it is the denial of a real physical incarnation and a real physical resurrection. He came to conquer! He will conquer! He will not be denied the fruit of his travail. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof. He made it. He redeemed it. He will have it. He has not evaporated into some never-to-be-touched-again realm of the spirit. He is reigning at the Father's right hand until the time for the restoration of all things.

"Two Appearings of Christ"



"For the "GRACE" of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the "GLORY" of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for Himself a people of His Own who are zealous for good deeds. Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one



look down on you." (Titus 2:11-15) Notice first of all from our text in Titus 2 that there are two appearings of Christ — One called an appearing of GRACE, the other called an appearing of GLORY. Verse 11: "For the Grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men." That is the First Coming Of Christ — The Appearance Of Grace. Then verse 13: "Awaiting our Blessed Hope, the appearing of the Glory of our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ." That is the Second Coming Of Christ — The Appearance Of Glory.

First grace, then glory. In Paul's mind these two are inseparably linked. Which is why the rejection of a real Second Coming is an attack on the very center of our faith, namely, The First Coming Of Christ to die for sins. The Christ Who will come in glory is the Christ Who came in grace.

"These Verses Sandwich Our Blessed Hope"

Titus 2 Verse 14 describes just how that Grace appeared — **"Christ gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a people of His Own who are zealous for good deeds."** So when the Grace of God appeared in history about 2,000 years ago, it appeared as a real man, who really died to redeem us from sin and to make us zealous, or passionate, for good deeds. This was the aim or purpose of the appearance of God's Grace in Jesus Christ. That same aim of Grace is described in Titus verse 12 as well: **"The Grace of God appeared training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world."** That is the same as saying (in verse 14) that Christ aimed to purify us and make us zealous for good deeds. **So verses 12 and 14 are like a sandwich around verse 13. "While we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the Glory of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."** Both verses describe the aim and effect of God's Grace as it appeared in The First Coming Of Jesus Christ. The meat in the middle of the sandwich is our Blessed Hope (verse 13). **What God's Grace has begun in our lives through the "First Coming" Of Christ His Glory He will complete in our lives through the "Second Coming" Of Christ.**

"Looking Back and Looking Forward"

I think it would be fair to say on the basis of these four verses (11–14) that the incentive and power to live a Christian life pleasing to God comes from two directions as it were: **it comes from looking back with gratitude to the grace of God that appeared in Jesus Christ at His First Coming when he purchased our redemption; and it comes from looking forward with Hope to the Glory of God that will appear at The Second Coming when He**

completes our redemption. Hebrews 9:27–28 describes the connection between the past and future work Christ as clearly as any biblical text. **"Just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, 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."**

This passage teaches so clearly that the saving work of Christ began with His First Coming when He bore our sin in His body on the Cross and will be completed at His Second Coming when He saves us from the final wrath of God and gives us rest in His Kingdom. If you strip away The Second Coming then Salvation is torn in half. 1 Thessalonians 1:10 clearly tells us that we are not appointed to the wrath of God that is coming upon the earth "For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with Him" (1 Thessalonians 5:9,10). And 1 Thessalonians 1:10 tells us Jesus is coming back to rescue His own. "And to wait for His Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead—Jesus, Who rescues us from the wrath that is coming."

"So What Is Our Blessed Hope?"

The word blessed can mean "happy" or "beneficial"; our hope is "blessed" in that Jesus' return will be an amazing, joyful experience for the believer in Christ. We will be blessed beyond measure when we see Christ. The trials of this life will be over, and we will see that **"Our present sufferings**



"Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?"



This Jesus, Who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven."

are not worth comparing with the Glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). The word hope does not communicate uncertainty, as in "I hope that something might occur"; rather, it is the glad assurance that something will take place. Jesus is our Hope, and no one can take that hope away. "Hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us" (Romans 5:5). Jesus said He would return, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, so that where I Am, there you may be also." (John 14:3), The angels said He would return, "They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, Who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11), and the Epistles say He will return. Jesus' imminent return should motivate the believer to live godly in an ungodly world. The word "looking" in Titus 2:13 is the key for that to happen. To be "looking" means that we live each day in continual anticipation and expectancy, with the conviction that