**Our Blessed Hope & Consequences of His Return**

**Philippians 3:20-21**

**February 9th, 2025**

**READING THE TEXT**

**20 But our citizenship is in heaven—and we also eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,  21who will transform these humble bodies of ours into the likeness of his glorious body by means of that power by which he is able to subject all things to himself.**

**INTRODUCTION**

How many of you eagerly wait for our Savior to come back? Why should we be so eager and hopeful for his return? Jesus, Paul, and John taught times doctrine for their followers to comfort them. In their time, and in some places today people often died or were severely persecuted for their faith. Like Paul, they faced dead all day long. In Sudan gangs of thugs regularly attack and burn down churches and kill Christians. It is the same in India and North Korea and on nearly every continent. These people could relate to the true focus on these passages. To comfort those who were afraid of death. What would happen when they died? Would Christ bring them to heaven? What would happen to their bodies when they died?

This passage focuses on why we have reason to be so hopeful. The focus of our hope is rooted in what Jesus will do upon his return, ***transform these humble bodies of ours***. The transformation of our humble bodies is not usually the focus of our end-time discussion, but it was for Paul. Today when people discuss end times doctrine they usually talk about the timing of the rapture or the millennium. But that is not the focus of end times passages. We make complicated charts, but they simply wanted to know whether it was worth dying for Jesus. That is the focus of the end times passages, not a secret rapture or a millennium or a separate end times track for ethnic Jews, which is what we focus on. Let’s work through our passage.

**PREACHING THE TEXT**

**20 But our citizenship is in heaven—and we also eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,**

CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN

 When you are adopted, you normally become a citizen of the nation of your Father. I recall when we adopted our son Schneider from Haiti. At our adoption we took vows to care for him like our own and he got papers that make it appear as if he were born into our family. He became a citizen through adoption. We are adopted by God through Jesus Christ. The citizenship papers that prove we are members of heaven are the Holy Spirit. Like a seal on a passport, the Holy Spirit is the mark that we are citizens of heaven. We are citizens of heaven who can communicate with heaven’s king right now. But we are temporarily traveling on this earth, and in our country, but this world is now like a foreign land and our highest citizenship is in heaven. Our king lives in our hearts, not political leaders of our day.

 The second part of that verse says; ***“We wait for a Savior who will transform our lowly bodies.”*** The resurrection and transformation of our bodies is a primary focus of all major end-time passages. That is our great hope because the decay and death of our bodies is our greatest problem.

EAGERLY AWAIT A SAVIOR FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF OUR BODIES = THE BLESSED HOPE

 You have heard the term the “blessed hope.” Most people think about the blessed hope as a secret rapture in which we will suddenly disappear and go to heaven. But I think this idea of a secret rapture is too small of a vision of the blessed hope. I think it comes from an escapism mentality in which we want to save our own bacon and get out of the way of trouble. But that does not seem to be what Paul ever talks about. He talks about a hope that is much greater than saving our own skin and escaping difficulties. Paul’s end-time passages are always about something bigger and greater than that. The blessed hope according to scripture is the appearing of Jesus Christ. And what will Jesus do when He appears? He will raise the dead and transform our lowly bodies. How do we know the real blessed hope is the appearing of Jesus Christ and not a secret rapture? It’s right in the text.

**Titus 2:13**

**11For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.**

According to this passage the “blessed hope” is the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our greatest hope is not people disappearing, but it is God appearing! If people suddenly disappeared it would make the news. It would be a big deal and a huge mystery. But the appearance of Jesus Christ in all his unveiled glory would do more than that. All nations and kings would shrink and cower at his appearance and the citizens of heaven would rejoice that the King of Kings has returned to rescue us from persecution and death.

 There are many popular novels that suggest the blessed hope is that Christians will suddenly disappear and secretly go to heaven. But Paul clearly identifies the “blessed hope” as the appearing of Jesus Christ. His appearance is heralded by a shout and trumpet blast. There is nothing secret about that.

ILLUSTRATION – STAR TRECK – UNVEILING

 How many of you have watched Star Trek? Do you remember the cling-on ships had the ability to cloak themselves making them invisible. They were still there but they were invisible to the naked eye. We live in an age in which God’s presence is with us. God is omnipresent and he overlooks his creation. He sees us but we do not see Him. Jesus is cloaking himself or veiling his presence.

 God is invisible. He lives in a different dimension. He is close but we cannot see him. The invisible God became visible when Jesus took on flesh, entered our dimension and unveiled himself. He did this in a humble manner by becoming like us.

[**John 1:18**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+1%3A18&version=ESV)**ESV**

**No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.**

[**Colossians 1:15**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Colossians+1%3A15&version=ESV)**ESV**

**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.**

 Jesus became visible so we could believe and receive the truth from Him. But then, after making the unseen God seen, he once again cloaks himself and becomes unseen.

[**1 Timothy 3:16**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Timothy+3%3A16&version=ESV)**ESV**

**Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.**

The blessed hope is when Jesus once again uncloaks himself and becomes visible. When he appears, he will manifest his full glory to the world. He will make the fulness of God visible face to face.

 The omnipresent God overlooks the entire earth seeking to bless and guide us quietly by His Holy Spirit and urging us to live holy lives. But then instantly at a blast of the trumpet God will unveil himself and reveal his presence. The light goes on and we can see him.

 Imagine if a million angels instantly appeared. We know they are there. Even unbelievers think angels exist. But what if instantly thousands or millions of angels appeared to the naked eye. It would shake us up for sure. Then imagine if God himself, more brilliant than 10,000 suns appeared in all his blinding glory. What if the return of Jesus is simply an unveiling or uncloaking of his glory by becoming visible to us? It is no wonder that the believers will shout with happiness at His return and unbelievers will try to flee in terror and panic. Imagine the God you have hated and fought against instantly became visible in all his glory.

 Believers will be caught up in the air to “**meet”** the Lord like a greeting party. The bible does not say we will disappear, but we will be caught up to “**meet**” the Lord in the air as he returns or appears. At the same time the graves will be emptied, and the souls of dead believers will return to their bodies which have been restored. They too will join us in meeting the Lord in the air. That is how 1st and 2nd Thessalonians presents the so called “rapture.” I could do many sermons on this, and maybe we will revisit this in the future. But for today I want to talk about the blessed hope. What is the primary hope that we have related to the return of Jesus?

**The Resurrection**

The hope is not disappearing. The hope is resurrection! The greatest problem all people have is that our bodies are wearing out. Eventually our bodies decay and they give out and we die. I think of my youth when I was an athlete. I could slam dunk and basketball, now I struggle to get out of a chair. I used to run 6-minute miles but now it takes me 6 minutes to get off the ground if I fall. I used to bench press over 300 pounds but now my shoulder has shooting pain when I try to push a shovel. We are wearing out, the clock is running out, and our bodies will eventually tap out. That is our greatest problem.

Jesus has the answer to our greatest problem. **Philippians 3:20** say; **the Lord Jesus Christ,  21… will transform these humble bodies of ours into the likeness of his glorious body**

The blessed hope is the appearance of Jesus and our resurrection from the dead, and the transformation of our bodies that wear out, into bodies like Jesus, who was raised and restored to perfect health. He restores our souls now but will restore our bodies when he returns. That is our hope. He appears and speaks life into dead and decaying bodies. Jesus calls us out of the grave like Lazarus. That is the primary hope presented in the end times passage.

If your body is wearing out and death is knocking hard on your door, know that the resurrection is coming! If you die before the Lord appears, God will give your soul rest and a temporary place to be with Him until the blessed hope, his appearing and the resurrection occurs.

Our hope in the resurrection explains why, from the beginning of the Christian era, the Christian funeral service begins with these words of comfort from our Lord: **“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies” (John 11:25).**

 Let’s look at one more passage.

 **(1 Thess. 4:14–17) We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. (1 Thess. 4:14–17)**

If you are alive when the Lord returns you will **meet** the Lord in the air and greet him when He makes himself visible. It’s right in the text. And we will be side by side in that greeting party with those who were raised from the dead and came out of the graves. And at that time as we rise to greet the Lord, He will remove or take away those who hate him and he will heal the earth. And then we will inhabit the new earth with our visible Lord and Savior. All that Adam and Eve lost will be restored. They walked with God in the garden, and we will walk with the Lord on the new earth. Paul says the same thing in 1 Corinthians. There is nothing about disappearing, but only Christ appearing to fix our greatest problem.

TRANSFORM OUR LOWLY BODIES = THE BLESSED HOPE

**1 Corinthians 15:50–54: …Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”**

 Forget the complicated timelines about the end times. It is simple. The Lord will suddenly appear. And our hope is that our bodies will be healed and no longer wear out. And Jesus will put an end to death. That is our blessed hope. That is what we eagerly look forward to. The appearing of Jesus who will stop us from dying and give us an earth that is not riddled with death, disease and calamities that we now see.

**SUMMARY / CHALLENGE**

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THIS MAKE?

 If you are sick or have a fatal illness you have a blessed hope. Jesus will return and with one word rid you of cancer or heart problems or even achy joints. And if you die before he returns, He will keep your soul with him and then, at the right time he will remake your old body into one that is vital and will last forever with Him.

 If you look for words of comfort for those who are sick or dying, this is the hope we can give. Trust Jesus to save your soul and save your body and the whole earth where we will dwell with him. Jesus came to die for our sins, but he also showed us that he could raise Lazarus and himself from the dead. He promised to do the same for us. That is our hope. Jesus is our hope.

When bad things happen to us, and they will, we do not mourn as those who have no hope. Jesus will return as He promised, and we will rise again.

**1 Thess 4 13Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.**

**TAKING IT HOME**

1. Do you know Jesus as Savior and Lord? Have you trusted him to remove your sins and reserve a place for you with Him?
2. Will you allow every ache and pain remind you that Jesus promised and vowed to raise you from the dead and fix your body forever.