

The Blessed Hope

From the moment Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, the human race has longed for a return to the pristine beauty of Eden lost! Biblical writers longed for it; Jesus promised it and John the Revelator said he saw it in vision. The theme of the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ and the hope of a restored creation have nerved millions through the ages to hold on a little longer!

The first person to predict this glorious event was Enoch. He declared, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Jude 14 When the Lord comes again the 2nd time, He will not come alone. The previous verse said His saints would come with Him. The actual Greek word there means 'holy ones'. The holy ones that return to this earth with Jesus are His angels. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." Matthew 16:27

When Jesus and His angels return to this earth to redeem His children, it will be an event that everyone will see. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindred's of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." Rev. 1:7 In fact, when Jesus referred to His coming, He spoke of lightning. "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:27 Being from the Western part of the United States, I never experienced lightning until we moved to Pennsylvania in the 1980's. In the summer, the thunder and lightning would shake the sky, the ground, and get your attention very quickly. The lightning flashes across the sky from east to west and so will the 2nd coming of Christ be!

While the heavens will be flashing at His coming, the earth will be in upheaval too. Notice, "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. 6:14-17 Mountains will be disappearing, islands will be moving out of their places; the heavens will disappear; truly, at the coming of Christ the whole earth will be in convulsion. Peter describes it as a fiery time, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all

should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?" 2 Peter 3:9-12

Before the Lord turns this earth into a fiery crematorium, He will be sure that His children are safe in His hands. Those who by faith in the power of Jesus Christ have walked in harmony with His law; those who have lived up to all the light the Lord has shed across their path; they will meet the Lord in the air. Notice these verses, "But 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. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For 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. For 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: Then 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. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Paul declares that those who followed Christ in this world are not in heaven. He says they are sleeping in the grave until Jesus returns. At the 2nd Coming, the Lord's followers that are dead, will rise up from their graves and meet the Lord in the air. Those who are following Christ, who are still alive at His coming, will also be raised up from this sin polluted earth and will also meet the Lord in the air!

Paul also makes these points clear in 1 Corinthians 15:51-55 when he writes, "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" It is at the 2nd coming that the dead are raised to meet Christ. It is at the 2nd coming that mortals, who have come under the dominion of death and the grave, will see their tombs shattered and will be clothed with immortality. It is only at the return of Jesus that death is finally defeated and the Lord's obedient children will be delivered from their dirty graves!

It was this glorious time to which the prophet Job looked for his wonderful deliverance from the tomb. Notice, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day

upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.” Job 19:25-27 Job understood that he would come under the dominion of death. He knew that worms would consume his body of dust, but he knew that long after that his Redeemer would come and would clothe Job in immortality at His 2nd Coming! . It was the awareness of this reality that strengthened Job to go through many a sore trial and conflict. Paul longed for the 2nd Coming too. “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:6-8 Paul laid hold of the assurance that he, along with the redeemed of the ages, would receive a crown of glory when Jesus comes the 2nd time!

Going through the conflicts of earth can be very difficult. This is one of the reasons why the Bible writers assured their followers of the glorious return of Jesus. Paul called it the Blessed Hope. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; ***Looking for that blessed hope***, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Titus 2:11-14 We look into the near future. With the assurance of the Word of God, we know that the Lord will soon return. All the signs point to its imminent occurrence. We fear nothing up ahead for Christ prepares eternal mansions for the redeemed. He promised us, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” John 14:1-3

We know that soon the kingdoms of this world will turn to dust before the mighty power of the Lord. At His coming, the supposed glory of nations' will be as nothing before the Lord of glory. Just as assuredly as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Pagan Rome, and Papal Rome fell in the past; so without doubt, the Lord will one day shatter the sky and return in the clouds of heaven. Are you preparing, friend, to meet the Lord Jesus in peace? He knocks today at the door of your heart and would like to take up residence in your life through faith in His power. The choice is ours. “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Rev. 3:20