

Blessed Hope

05/25/2014

Hymns: 33 When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder 34 When We All Get to Heaven
Psalm 8; 50:1-6

Stop the world! I want to get off. How many of you feel that way sometimes? I think we all do. We live in a world of paradoxes. As technology advances at an ever-quickening pace, the moral decline we've witnessed in just our lifetimes has been breathtaking. Righteousness and godliness are being replaced with godlessness. Good is bad, and bad is good. Science is religion (fanciful, unproven ideas are accepted as fact), and religion is science (mankind worships the work of his own hands and mind).

In John 17:16, Jesus intercessory prayer for His own, He referred to them as:
"...not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

In Philippians 3:20 we read:
... our citizenship is in heaven;...

If you feel a bit alienated, you're not alone and according to scripture, you *should* feel that way.

Review

You may recall, the last time we met we looked at the Battle of Armageddon and how the Battle of Gideon may be a foreshadowing of that great conflict. We considered the seven-year Tribulation period where Israel and the nations of the earth will face the **wrath** of Almighty God, and we saw how **that** time of judgment will end in a great battle where the Lord wins the victory.

But where is the church, that is, the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, during that time? Will they go through that terrible time of judgment? The answer to that question is an emphatic No! Today we will see how the Word of God describes an event called the "blessed hope" that helps us answer these questions and more.

Let's get right to it.
Titus 2

*[13] Looking for **that blessed hope**, and the **glorious appearing** of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;*

The big question is, When will this event happen? The Bible says nothing remains to be fulfilled. It can happen at any time.

I Thessalonians 4

[13] But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, ...

The Thessalonians were concerned over what would happen to those Christians who had already died.

[14] For **if** we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which **sleep in Jesus** referring to people who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior but have died.

will God bring with him.

[15] ... that we which are alive and remain unto **the coming of the Lord** shall not prevent them which are asleep [dead].

The Apostle Paul then proceeds to describe in detail the sequence of five events that will occur:

[16] 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:

[17] Then we which are alive and remain shall be **caught up** together with [whom?] them [that is those who have died in Christ] [where?] *in the clouds*,

to meet the Lord in the air:

and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

[18] Wherefore **comfort one another** with these words.

The event described in that passage is called the **Rapture of the Church**. The word *rapture* is taken from the Latin translation of the Greek word *harpazo* which means “to snatch up” and is translated in verse 17 as “caught up” by most sound Bible translators. You may have heard that the word *rapture* is not in the Bible. If you were to go to a concordance, you would find that statement correct, but if you dig a little deeper, as we have done, you’ll see it is indeed there.

Let's now look at the words of Jesus to His disciples at the Passover right before He went to the cross:

John 14

[1] **Let not your heart be troubled:** ye believe in God, believe also in me.

[2] 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.**

[3] 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.

Jesus said He is coming again to take us home to be with Him, and knowing this should allay our fears.

Will Not Face God's Wrath

Last time, we read the following verse, but it bears repeating in this context as we want to make it clear that the church living before the time of the Tribulation **will not face the wrath of God**.

For God hath **not** appointed us to **wrath**, but to obtain **salvation** by our Lord Jesus Christ, (1 Thessalonians 5:9)

Here are two more verses that reinforce this truth:

... ye **turned to God from idols** to serve the living and true God; and to **wait for his Son** from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which **delivered us from the wrath to come**. (1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10)

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, **we shall be saved from wrath** through him. (Romans 5:9)

Examples / Types

There's still more. Consider God's protection of the righteous from His wrath that we find in the lives of Enoch and Lot in the Old Testament. Enoch lived before the time of the universal flood – a catastrophic judgment of the earth.

Genesis 5

*[22] ...**Enoch walked with God** [three hundred years] after he begat Methuselah, and begat sons and daughters:*

*[24] **And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.***

We have a few interesting facts here.

Does name *Methuselah* ring a bell with you? What do we know about him?

- Lived 969 years – longest lifespan recorded in the Bible (v. 27)

Another interesting fact is that “he [Enoch] was not; for God took him.” What exactly does that mean? Does the Bible mention this elsewhere? As a matter of fact, it does.

Hebrews 11

*[5] By faith Enoch **was translated** [meaning taken up] that he should **not see death**; and was not found, because God had **translated him**: for before **his translation** he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

So let's sum up the parallel of Enoch to the rapture of the church. Enoch was a man of faith who walked with God and pleased Him. He did not see death but instead was taken up by God. He was taken out of this world before the catastrophic universal flood that came from God's judgment.

Lot

Our second example of God's righteous being spared His wrath is from the life of Lot. You may recall, that Lot was the nephew of Abram. When Abram left his home for the Promised Land, his nephew **Lot**

tagged along with him. When there was a famine in the land, Abram went to Egypt and Lot went with him there also. Abram increased in wealth while in Egypt and when he (and Lot) returned to Canaan, they had such large flocks, their keepers fought against each other.

Abram told Lot in a very nice way they needed to part ways. He asked Lot to pick where he wanted to live and Abram said would take what was left. As we will learn later, Lot was **a city boy at heart**. He chose the well-watered plain of Jordan and the city of Sodom, so Abram took the hill country.

Next, we learn that Lot was attacked, captured, and robbed of his possessions. When Abram learned of it, he jumped into action and rescued both Lot and his possessions.

Abram had a son through Sarai's handmaid *Hagar* named *Ishmael*. God spoke to Abram again giving him and his wife new names -- Abraham and Sarah respectively – and a promise that Isaac was on the way.

Then the Lord told Abraham that he would destroy Sodom and Gomorrah because of their great sin.

Abraham entreated God to spare the judgment if there were 50 righteous in the land. He then bargained further with the Lord trying 45, 40, 30, 20, and finally 10. Sadly, there were not even **ten** righteous there. Here we get to the key part. The Lord **could not destroy the cities** until Lot and his household were safely removed from the place.

The Lord's angels grabbed Lot, his wife, and his two daughters that still lived in his house by the hand and whisked them from the city. Lot, the city boy, was afraid to go to the mountains. He plead with them to let him go to a city.

Genesis 19

[19]...I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die:

[20] Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one [named Zoar]: Oh, let me escape [there], ... and my soul shall live.

The Lord granted Lot's request and spared Zoar but told Lot to hurry there :

[22] .. for I cannot do any thing [until you go there].

So Lot went to Zoar.

[24] Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire ... out of heaven;

[25] And he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and [the plant life].

[26] But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

Then in the New Testament we have a couple accounts of God's protection of His own:

Luke 17

The question is asked in verse 20, When will the kingdom of God come?

Jesus answered:

[26] And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.

*[27] They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the **day that Noe entered into the ark**, and the flood came, and **destroyed them all**.*

[28] Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded;

*[29] But the **same day that Lot went out of Sodom** it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and **destroyed them all**.*

[30] Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

II Peter 2

*[5] And [the Lord] **spared not the old world, but saved Noah ...**, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;*

*[6] **And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes ...**, making [an example of those ungodly people];*

*[7] And **delivered just Lot**, vexed with the filthy [behavior] of the wicked:*

[9] The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

In both of these passages we see the clear pattern. The Lord rescued His righteous (Noah and Lot) first before destroying all of the rest.

Keep in mind, we believe there are two future comings of Jesus. First is the rapture of the church where He comes in the clouds, that we're considering today. The other is His coming to set up His kingdom when He sets foot on the earth. It's easy to mix them up. I believe Noah actually refers to the kingdom and Lot refers to the rapture, but both still make the point that God rescues his righteous from His wrath.

There's another very interesting fact to consider in our story of Lot. Once he and his two daughters made it safely **from** Sodom to Zoar, Lot's wife was out of the picture. She had looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt. His daughters plotted to raise up male offspring in his name through them. They got him drunk beyond knowing what he was doing on two consecutive nights and lay with him. Subsequently, each bore him a son. As a result, the half-breed people, the Moabites and the Ammonites, were born.

We see clearly now another reason why Lot and these daughters had to be rescued. We learn later in

scripture that Ruth was a *Moabite*. **Lot could not die until** he had produced the ancestor of his descendant Ruth.

Why does Ruth matter? She's **in** the royal (Davidic) line of Jesus Christ. Ruth's son was the grandfather of David through whom came Joseph and through whom came Jesus Christ's the legal right to the throne of David (Matthew 1:5).

Application

As you've lived your life, no doubt you've experienced the joy of anticipation. Whether it was birthdays, Christmas, vacation trips, getting a driver's license, your first sweetheart, graduating, a new job, marriage, a promotion, a raise, a child, a new house, or retirement. Half of the fun is looking forward to these happy times.

When we started this study, we found the expression the “blessed hope.” Our Lord has gone to prepare a place for us. As we learned in the past, this will not be anything like what we might build or imagine down here. The place will be fantastic beyond comprehension.

For those of us who know him, that's our hope. That is God's promise. Our loving bridegroom the Lord Jesus Christ will take us, His bride, to glory to be with Him. That indeed is a blessed hope.

I Corinthians 15

*[51] Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall **all** be changed,
[52] 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.*

Do you remember that big question: When will this happen? It can happen at any time. Are you ready?

Benediction

*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;
and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body
be preserved blameless
unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Faithful is he that calleth you,
who also will do it. (I Thessalonians 5:23-24)*

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