

OUR BLESSED HOPE

By Pastor Greg Hooker

INTRODUCTION

One of the most reassuring teachings in all of Scripture is that of the rapture of the Church – commonly referred to as the ‘Blessed Hope’. Practically every Christian burial alludes to this sacred event. The Blessed Hope gives hope to the hopeless, encouragement to the downcast, and strength for the weak. Whenever it seems life is getting you down, the world is collapsing under your feet, and death is encroaching upon your family or friends; give attention to the comfort of the Blessed Hope. Notice three things concerning.

I. THE HUPPA

“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

During the Lord’s Last Supper, Christ promised His believing disciples He was to go away for a time, but would return for them, *“...I will come again, and receive you unto myself...”* This stirring promise wasn't given to everyone; only to the believers gathered around the table (Judas had already left by then.)

In an ancient Jewish wedding tradition concerning the promise of the bridegroom; the ‘ketubah’, or engagement would take place. Following, the bridegroom would depart for a time to prepare a new home for them to live – usually an addition built on to his father’s house. When the dwelling place was finished, the ‘huppah’, or formal ceremony would occur. The bride during this time, however, was kept in great suspense and expectancy of her returning bridegroom – often occurring in the middle of the night by surprise. The wedding ceremony was then followed by a seven-day celebration – a festive event of joy and great celebration.

In like manner, if you have accepted the invitation of the Groom by faith, you are ‘ketubahed’ or ‘engaged’ to the Bridegroom! As the bride of Christ we wait in expectation of His return to ‘snatch’ us away in the night to the ‘huppah’, the formal marriage ceremony!

After the marriage of Christ and His bride, seven years of festivities will transpire in our new home added to our Heavenly Father’s house. Meanwhile, unsaved people left behind after the rapture will go through a seven-year *“time of Jacob’s trouble”*, or the Great Tribulation.

II. THE HARPAZO

“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.” – I Thessalonians 4:16-18

The Apostle Paul, writing to the church of Thessalonica, wanted to let the recently converted Christians from paganism know they did not have to sorrow like the teachings of their former religion. Having lived under pagan philosophy, the Thessalonians believed in the cessation of the soul at death. The resurrection was completely foreign to their way of thinking. As a result, when one of their loved ones died, they entered an extended period of time in which they excessively lamented because they would never see their loved ones again – not even in the here-after.

Thus, Paul wrote to them and made it clear there would certainly be a resurrection for all those who have died in Christ, *“...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.”* What a ‘blessed hope’ – a glorious comfort to know that the bodies of our saved loved ones will be resurrected from their graves at the coming of the Lord in the air! A heavenly reunion is set to take place very soon!

While the word ‘rapture’ so often used for this event is not found in the Scriptures, the phrase *“caught up”* in verse 17 is translated from the Greek word ‘Harpazo’. It literally means to ‘snatch up’, to ‘seize away with force’. When Jesus returns for His bride made spotless through His blood, the dead in Christ will emerge from their earthly tombs and together, with those who are alive and remain, will be ‘snatched away’, caught up in the moment and twinkling of an eye to meet the Lord in the air, and *“so shall we ever be with the Lord”!*

III. THE IMMINENT GATHERING

The word ‘imminent’ means that something could occur at any moment. The ‘rapture’ or ‘snatching away’ of the bride by the Bridegroom could happen at any time, day or night. There is nothing of prophetic nature that needs to occur prior to this event – nothing! The rapture of the Church is the next great episode on God’s time-table, and the Bible warns us to be ready at a moment’s notice – *“look up, your redemption draweth nigh”!*

Even during their life time, the Apostle Paul and the early Christians expected the return of their Lord. So much so, that many gave up their jobs and material possessions to be ready to go at a moment’s notice. Paul had to correct and exhort the Christians to continue working and exercise patience, for no one knows the hour the Lord will return.

Throughout history and even in this age, we have cults and false prophets encouraging people to give up everything, while setting dates for the rapture of the Church. If Paul warned of this misconception

during his life time, how much more should we disregard those who perpetrate this heresy today? Matthew 24:36 states, *“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.”*

While Jesus told us about many signs leading up to His coming, we are warned not to set dates for something *“no man, not the angels in heaven”* knows. How foolish it is to try and pin a precise date or time for something that’s only reserved for God to know!

CONCLUSION

The Blessed Hope has provided comfort to countless believers throughout history. In God’s perfect timing the dead in Christ will certainly rise from the dust and ashes and together with those living, meet the Bridegroom in the clouds. *“Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.”*

At any time the “shout” of the Lord, the “voice” of the archangel, and the sound of the “trumpet” could take place. Are you ready? Will you be a part of the bride when Jesus comes for us? Have you accepted by faith the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ? If not, would you say this simple sinner’s prayer believing it in your heart?

Dear Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and have a penalty to pay for my sins. That penalty is to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire apart from God. But I believe Jesus has already paid for my sins on the cross and arose from the grave to give me victory over death and hell. I ask you now, Jesus, to forgive me of my sins and save me. I trust you as my Savior with all my heart. In Jesus name, Amen.

If you prayed that prayer, then based upon the Word of God you are saved from hell and will spend eternity in Heaven. Would you share your decision with me that I may rejoice with you? Simply send me a note via email to: pastorgreghooker@yahoo.com