

The Blessed Hope

2/12/2023

The Big Idea: You should keep watch for the coming of the Lord.

Introduction

Last week, we examined the doctrine of Divine Healing. Both spiritual healing and physical healing are part of the salvation Jesus died to purchase for us. We learned from God's word that, like salvation, healing is ongoing for believers and that the final effect of healing will only be realized at the resurrection when Jesus returns. Today, we're going to learn about the resurrection and begin to talk about the end of things on earth. These doctrines are sometimes called eschatology or the study of the end. There are four beliefs that we will cover in the coming weeks and I probably won't be able to answer everyone's questions to their satisfaction. In fact, in these messages, I don't intend to address theories and timelines. Rather, we will be looking at the core beliefs Christians hold about the end times and what is most important, regardless of which timeline you prefer. That said, this week we're talking about The Blessed Hope.

In my time as a pastor, I've conducted funerals for infants, I've preached funerals for young adults who have died of overdose or disease, and I've also had the privilege of officiating services for longtime members of this congregation, saints who served the Lord faithfully and held the faith to their final breath. While I may attend more funerals than most, I doubt my story and experience is too different than yours. I'm sure you've lost loved ones and close friends.

There is an enormous difference between the funeral of a believer and an unbeliever. Even if the believer was young and we feel that he/she was gone too soon, there's a vast difference. Standing in front of a room of people that you don't know what they believe about death is a privilege because you get to present the gospel. But there is often an empty feeling, a glazed over look of sorrow without expectation. But when you preach to a room of people who are celebrating the life of someone they expect to see again at the resurrection, there is often a deep sorrow at the loss, but alongside that, there is joy and hope for the future. It truly is a celebration.

Believers in Christ have a blessed hope that Jesus will return and when He does, we will be resurrected. This doctrine states: "*The resurrection of those who have fallen asleep in Christ and their translation together with those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord is the imminent and blessed hope of the church.*"

We're going to define and examine a few of the terms in this doctrine, but then we're going to take it beyond the realm of curiosity and apply it to the present because this is not just a doctrine of the future; it's a doctrine for the present.

Let's start with the ideas of resurrection and translation.

- The Bible teaches not just that the dead will be raised but that believers will be resurrected, and there is a distinction. See 1 Corinthians 15:51-53.

- Paul says that when Jesus returns, those who have believed in His death and resurrection for salvation and have themselves died will be raised imperishable. This means that their bodies will no longer be subject to death and decay. See Revelation 21:4.
- This implies that we will no longer be subject to sinful desires and temptation. 1 Corinthians 15:56 teaches that “The sting of death is sin...”, meaning that the cause of death is sin. So, if the result is removed, so also is the cause. In other words, there will be no death, therefore, there will be no sin.
- While we know that our resurrection bodies will not be subject to death and sin, we don’t know exactly what they will be like. See 1 Corinthians 15:42–43; 1 John 3:2.
- We won’t be subject to the same weaknesses, dishonors, and decay. See 1 Corinthians 15:37
- The language of the doctrine uses the word “translation. To translate something is to change it from one form to another. Those who are alive when Jesus returns will not be physically resurrected, because by definition, they won’t be dead. But they will be translated or changed.
- If you are a believer, your blessed hope is that Jesus is returning and that when He does, whether you are dead or alive, you will be changed. See 1 Corinthians 15:52.
- A crucial component to our belief about the end times and what will occur is that Jesus is coming back. God’s Word does not present this as a metaphor to be spiritualized. See John 14:2-3; Acts 1:11; Matthew 24:44.
- Jesus is coming back. When He returns, those who have faith in Him will be changed. If we’re dead, we’ll be resurrected. If we’re still alive, we’ll be translated. We’ll have imperishable, glorified bodies. And this could happen any time. This is our blessed hope.

You should keep watch for the coming of the Lord. This is not only a doctrine for the future but for the present, so let’s apply it.

- Concerning the Second Coming of Jesus, we want to be watching expectantly. See 2 Timothy 4:8.
- Jesus is coming. There will be a cry of command and the voice of an archangel. There will be the sound of a trumpet. We have to be ready, watching for Him, loving and longing for His coming and that loving and longing motivates us in several ways.

1. You can have hope in sorrow.

- The first motive is hope in the midst of sorrow. You can have hope in sorrow. Life is difficult and it can be very discouraging. Sometimes, the sorrows of life tempt us to despair, to give up hope, to give up courage, to give up faith. But in spite of all the difficulties we face in life, including those that may come as a result of following Jesus, God’s Word reminds us not to lose heart. See 2 Corinthians 4:16–18. There is something being prepared for us. There is a day when God’s glory will be revealed. We’re looking to the unseen, the promise of Christ’s coming and our resurrection. Christian, fix your eyes

on Jesus. I told you last week that the doctrine of divine healing and the doctrine of resurrection are closely linked and that when we divide them we can fall into error.

2. You can have passion for purity.

- The hope we have for the return of Christ and the resurrection not only gives us relief from sorrow but motivates us toward purity. See 1 John 3:2–3.
- This kind of purity that those who are looking for Jesus have is purity from sin and the world. See 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.
- You could translate this to many other situations where you feel like the pull of the present world is overwhelming your commitment to Christ. It could pertain to sexuality, be fear over money, or it could be an addiction. Whatever circumstance threatens to overwhelm your faith, let me encourage you to watch for the coming of the Lord. Get your eyes back on Jesus. Remember that the things of this world are passing away.

3. You can have urgency for the mission.

If you visit a cemetery and walk down the rows of markers, it's awe inspiring to imagine the graves of believers opening on the day that Jesus returns. I think if I got to pick a place to be when Jesus returns, it would be a cemetery to watch in wonder at the resurrection of believers. But as awe inspiring as that thought is, it's terrible to think of its opposite, which is also true. In the end, not only will believers be raised, but unbelievers as well. Believers will be raised to eternal life but unbelievers will be raised to eternal judgment.

- If we keep the coming of the Lord in front of us, focusing on it as we should, it will motivate the mission that Jesus left for us to make disciples. Let's not be people who have fallen in love with the present world and abandoned the mission Christ left us to fill the Kingdom.
- Our prayer should not only be that God would increase our burden for the lost but that He would expand our vision of His coming Kingdom. See 1 Corinthians 15:58.
- Watching for the Lord should cause our work for the Lord to abound.

Conclusion

The good news is not only that Jesus died and was raised from the dead, but that He is coming and we will be raised as well. Some who claim to believe think of their faith as an affiliation with a church or religion, or maybe a prayer they prayed once. It's kind of like an insurance policy they bought for something they aren't too sure is going to happen and they've long since forgotten about it.

But that's not salvation and it's not how believers should think of heaven. You don't have a ticket to heaven, you have the promise of a groom coming to get His bride. You don't have an

insurance policy, you have the promise of the King coming in glory to judge the world. You don't have some good feelings once in a while, you have the assurance that when Christ appears, you will be like Him! Set your mind on this. Let it motivate you to live with joy in the midst of sorrow, to purify yourself from sin and the world, and to be urgent, because Jesus is coming soon.