

Today we bring this series on the appearing of our Lord to a close. The appearing is the hope of the Church which is His Body and this I tried to clarify as best I could. It is my hope that this has generated lots of personal Bible study. Thank you for your patience.

The following is a brief summary of our lessons and a final chart is offered to suggest the (out)-resurrection's relationship in the second coming time frame.

We started by noting Paul's twofold ministry and the two groups of letters which are dispensationally different. In Acts 26:22 Paul made this statement:

[Act 26:22](#) Then having obtained help from God, I stand until this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said was going to happen;

During the Acts period Paul wrote 7 letters, Galatians, 1&2 Corinthians, 1&2 Thessalonians, Hebrews and Romans in which he quotes the OT nearly 400 times. The hope of the Acts letters was included in the "promises made to the fathers" not the hope of the dispensation of the grace of God given to Paul after Israel were set aside at Acts 28.

We spent some time showing the Acts period was not the beginning of anything as is traditionally taught but the "end of the ages". The Lord came to Israel and was rejected, crucified and rose again. In Luke 24 the Lord spoke about suffering and glory. This glory was His return at the Feast of Trumpets to sit on the throne of His Father David. Peter's appeal to Israel (which was not cast aside during Acts) is that they repent and turn back to God then He would send the Lord Christ Jesus back to them (Acts 3:17-21). This is the glory and hope of the Acts period.

Paul's gospel of Acts 13 is exactly the same as Peter's in Acts 2 in its dispensational setting. In Acts 13 Paul quotes Psalm 2, 16, and Isaiah 55 which all speak of Christ dwelling with Israel and restoring the nation. The hope of Romans 15 is found in Deut.32, the Psalms and Isaiah 11 which is the kingdom of heaven on the earth. In Acts 13 Paul embraces the Gentiles according to the prophecy of Isaiah 49 which is also about the restoration of Israel. The Gentiles were added to make Israel jealous, to stimulate the Olive Tree (Roms.11:11-18) and the believing Jews and Gentiles in the Acts were the prophetic "remnant according to the election of grace", see Roms.9:24-29 and 11:5.

During the Acts period this return of the Lord in glory was expected in a very "little while" (Heb.10:37) and so the believers of Acts 2-4 sold their possessions. At that time they were not expecting to die and, in the light of this imminent second coming, Paul advised the Corinthians about marriage in 1Cor.7:8 & 26-29.

[1Co 7:29](#) But this I say, brothers, The time is short. It remains that both those who have wives should be as not having one.

Just as Israel were delivered from Egypt by the Passover Lamb and entered the Kingdom on the earth at the blowing of 7 trumpets, so during Acts the hope was the return of the Lord at the feast of Trumpets to "sit upon the throne of His glory" (Matt.25:31). Supernatural gifts were part of Israel's history and prophecy. In Exodus supernatural gifts were given to certain Israelites to make the high priest's garments and the tabernacle. Just as supernatural gifts prepared Israel to enter into the Land for service, so the gifts of the Acts period were powers of the coming age on the earth Hebs.6:5. Paul's gospel of Romans was to establish the believers at that time by imparting some gift (Roms.1:11, 15:19, 16:25). He also wrote the Corinthians that they would be confirmed (with those gifts) unto the end; the apocalypse (1Cor.1:4-8).

As Israel paused at Mt Sinai in their journey to the Promised Land, we read in Ex.19 that the Lord descended in a cloud, with trumpets, a voice, angels (Ps.68:17) and earthquakes to deliver the Law that Israel agreed to obey. This is where the Old (conditional) Covenant was established by blood. Moses went up to meet the Lord as He descended out of heaven. This meeting is a foretaste of 1Thess.4 in which passage Paul writes about the Lord descending out of heaven and the Jew and Gentile believers of the Acts period going up to meet Him as He descends. When this hope is realized in the future, then the New Covenant will be established and the Law written on Israel's heart (Jer.31:10, 33-34).

The modern "rapture" theory is an error of great confusion which grew from a total disregard for the dispensational setting of the Gospels and Acts periods. Here is 1Thess.4 in the gospels;

[Mat 24:29](#) And immediately after the tribulation of those days,

[Mat 24:30](#) And then the sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the heavens. And then all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the heaven with power and great glory.

[Mat 24:31](#) And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather His elect

[Mat 25:1](#) Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Mat 25:6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes! Go out to meet him.

Mat 25:31 But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He shall sit on the throne of His glory.

1Thess.4 is the identical setting of Matt., and not one word or phrase suggests anyone is going back into heaven. The return of the Lord to the earth in 1Thess.4 should be read with 2Thess.2 to see the prophetic Israeli setting:

1Th 4:16 For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ shall rise first.

1Th 4:17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in *the* clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.

The word “meet” cannot mean go back into heaven. 1Thess.4 is the hope of the remnant of the Acts period and other overcoming believers and 1Thess.4 is not the hope of the Church which is His body today.

At the end of the book of Acts (28:25-28) Israel were finally put aside for a time. The hope of 1Thess.4 was postponed along with the remaining events of Israel's history. Paul, now a prisoner of Christ for the Gentiles, was given another revelation, this time regarding a new dispensation called the dispensation of the grace of God (Eph.3:1-2). The post acts letters of Paul show this current dispensation which was hidden in God, unknown in the OT, Gospels or Acts Scriptures;

Eph 3:8 This grace is given to me (*who am* less than the least of all saints) to preach the gospel of the unsearchable riches of Christ among the nations,

Eph 3:9 and to bring to light what *is* the fellowship of the mystery which from eternity has been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ;

The 7 post Acts letters of Paul are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon. Within these letters there are less than 10 OT quotes. Abraham is not mentioned in these post Acts letters of Paul and the promises made to the fathers is nowhere to be found as the basis of hope. Now the believing Jews and Gentiles are created “one new man” and are not the remnant of the Acts period (Eph.2:11-17).

The hope of this present calling is stunning. The Church which is His body has been raised and seated with Christ in the heavenly places (Eph.2:4-7). While God has seated us there now in Christ, the hope is realized at our Lord's appearing, Col.3:12-4, which we see this from Scripture as the first stage of the Lord's second coming.

Stage 1 which concerns us, is in heavenly places where the Lord will appear (be revealed, manifested) and every member of the Church which is His Body will appear with Him there. Then follows stage 2 when He descends down through the clouds and the air and other believers of other times go to meet Him as He descends (1Thess.4). Then stage 3 when His feet stand on the Mount of Olives which concerns Israel. For the members of each of these companies, resurrection or changing will take place in each of the 3 stages of the Lord's second coming.

We found in Philippians 3 that Paul was reaching forth for the prize of the high calling. He wanted to win Christ, to know the power of the Lord's resurrection and he was willing to use any means to attain the (out)-resurrection from the dead not the resurrection of the dead (Phils.3:7-14). We compared this with 2Tim.2:1-12 where Paul writes of salvation with eternal glory, the crown and in that context, asks us to remember our Lord's resurrection. We suggested that the (out) resurrection was like our Lord's being better as to time and quality.

One last thing for us to consider, the Bible study rules of distinguishing things that differ and rightly dividing are found in Philippians and 2 Tim., the very post Acts letters of Paul which speak of the prize and crown. The Bible study rules are not to be disregarded in our examination of the Word of Truth if the prize and crown are important to us.

Of this one thing we can be certain; the Word of God speaks of reward for faithful service. It is my deepest desire that these lessons will inspire each of us to “press according to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”.

God Bless you for considering these things.

Previous lesson in this series can be found here;

www.bibleunderstanding.com/pastissues.htm