

- ° Unfortunately, many Christians couldn't answer this question because the subject gets avoided in most pulpits today.
 - Maybe it's avoided because there are so many different opinions on the subject.
 - Maybe because they think their people are immature Christians.
 - Maybe people just don't want to hear it because they're so wrapped up in their own lives.
- So, too often today in America, the gospel message has been watered down & people are told that God is there just to solve all your problems; make you successful, rich & happy.
- A recent best seller from one of the mega church leaders is titled "*Your Best Life Now*".
 - This is not our best life now; Our best life is the eternal life we'll have with Jesus.

1 Cor 15:19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

- If we could grasp the magnitude of time without end, & an eternal life with Jesus filled with wonder, we wouldn't be so consumed with the distractions of this world.
 - *Our Blessed Hope*; This is not hope like most think, I hope I win the lottery or ...
 - *Our blessed hope* is not hope for a better life that we can see & touch here & now.
Our blessed hope is faith, rooted in God's promises of returning to take us to live eternally with Him in paradise.

Ps 16:11b ... In your presence is fullness of Joy; At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

- This hope should be a desire, deep within our heart, to see those promises fulfilled to us.
- *Our Blessed Hope*, the return of Jesus to take His saints to a glorious life with Him should be an essential part of every believers daily walk of faith.

- ° In Paul's letter to the Ephesian believers, he prayed that they would receive revelation knowledge to know God, specifically so they could understand their blessed hope.

Eph 1:16–20 I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; ¹⁸[and] the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; [so] that you may know what is the hope of His calling, [and] what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints;

- Paul wants God to reveal Himself so *that you may know what is the hope of His calling*.
- What is the result of our faith? What does God have for us when we die? We should know!
- Honestly, the only real way to understand our blessed hope is by revelation from God.

1Cor 2:9 Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor has it entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

- It is not mansions or streets of gold; It's knowing Him, & living in His very presence.

¹⁹and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places ...

- Paul is praying for wisdom & revelation knowledge about God, so they will know the exceedingly great power for the believers resurrection from the dead & life with Him.
- Because Jesus was raised from the dead we have assurance that God's exceedingly great resurrection power will raise us from the dead also.
 - I want to be very clear here; This exceedingly great power isn't for new cars or bigger paychecks, & it's not for a great life that we'll experience now.

- Paul wants us to know God better so we'll understand that He wants us to be with Him in paradise forever.
- Our blessed hope is not for this life at all, but for our resurrection from the dead.
 - Don't misunderstand me, God wants us to be blessed in this life, but the church today has focused its attention on this life to the point of indulging our worldly lusts.
 - God is concerned about our life in the here & now, but we need to keep our eyes fixed on the prize & not get preoccupied with the cares of this world.

Mt 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

- God will take care of us in this life, if our attention is centered on Him & His eternal kingdom.
- ° Some pulpits don't preach our blessed hope because they think that their congregations are too immature to understand end times events.
 - But even though Paul had only been with the Thessalonian church for three weeks, he told them all about our blessed hope & end times events.

Acts 17:1–2 Now when they (Paul & Silas) had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ²Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures ...

- During those 3 weeks he told them all about our blessed hope & end times events.
- Paul's letters to the Thessalonian church were sent to clarify questions about these things.

2Thes 2:5 Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?

- One of the first things these baby christians were taught was our blessed hope, the end times events surrounding the return of Jesus for believers.
- Our blessed hope is part of the gospel; If Paul thought these new christians needed to know about it, I think we also need to know & understand it as well.
- ° In *1 Thessalonians* they had loved ones who died, but the rapture clearly hadn't happened yet.
 - Would they be left behind? Would they still go to heaven? How does it all happen?

1Thes 4:13-17 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, (died), lest you sorrow as others who have no hope.

- Paul wrote this letter to let them know that believers in Jesus will be raised from the dead.
- *those who have no hope*; There is no authority in the world that can assure life after death.
- We have God's Word, The Truth, the words of the one person who conquered death & then returned to tell us that He's made The Way for our eternal life.

¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

- This answers their question; dead believers will be raised to eternal life with Jesus.

^{17a} Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

- *Caught up*: This is where we get our word *Rapture*- the Gk= *Harpazo*, the Latin= *rapturo*.
- Notice Paul says: *we who are alive and remain*, he expected Jesus to return in his lifetime.

- Today, 2000yrs later, we also should still have an expectation of the return of Jesus for us.
 - The hope of His imminent return should keep us striving to grow in Him.

° In Paul's 2nd letter to the Thessalonians, someone had given them a letter, "as if from Paul", to deceive them into believing *The day of Christ*, (specifically the tribulation), had already begun.

*2 Thes 2:1–5 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, our gathering together to Him, we ask you, ²not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter as if from us, as though *the day of Christ* had come ⁵Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?*

- They were confused because Paul taught them the Rapture would happen before *The Day Of God's Wrath* is unleashed on an unbelieving sinful world; He told them:

1Thes 5:9 God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Believers will be raptured before God pours out His wrath on this rebellious world.

Isa 26:19–21 Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. ²⁰Come my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation is past. ²¹For behold, the LORD comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity.

- Isaiah confirms what Paul has taught them; God will call up faithful believers (dead & alive) to be hidden away in heaven, while unbelievers suffer God's wrath on earth.

° John gives his followers another important piece of information about our blessed hope.

1 John 3:2–3 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

- When we see Jesus at the rapture, He will be in His resurrected body, & we will have just received our new resurrected bodies as well.
- Our resurrected bodies will be just like Jesus' new body because Jesus became a man, died as a man, was buried as a man & was resurrected from the dead as a man.

Col 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

- Jesus is the firstborn from the dead & we are the 2nd, 3rd 4th... But Jesus is always preeminent.
- Everything we have from God comes thru Jesus & His covenant with God.
- That's why the NT refers to being *in Him & in Christ*, because everything comes thru Him.

° In Paul's 1st letter to the Corinthians, he gave them details about our new immortal bodies.

*1 Cor 15:51–54 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep (die) but we shall all be changed ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴So when this corruptible has put on incorruption and this mortal has put on immortality then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: *Death is swallowed up in victory. Death where is your sting? Hades where is your victory?**

- Our new immortal bodies can never die, death will no longer have any power over us.
- No more aging, sickness or disease, no more weakness; only life eternal in a perfect body.

° In Paul's 2nd letter to the Corinthians, he reaffirmed their hope for new immortal bodies.

2 Cor 5:1–2 For we know that if our earthly house, (Our mortal bodies), is destroyed, we have a building from God, (Our immortal bodies), a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²For in this (mortal body) we groan earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven (Our new bodies).

- Paul describes our bodies simply as “*our earthly house*”, but when the Lord returns we’ll move into our new house, our perfect immortal bodies.
- ° In Paul’s letter to the believers in Rome, he describes their hope as causing them to *eagerly wait* for their new bodies.

Rom 8:23–25 Even we ourselves (believers) groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. ²⁴For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance.

- Our greatest desire should be our blessed hope; Not for things we can see now, but for the day we’re united with Jesus in heaven.
- ° This may sound blasphemous but Jesus death did not complete God’s redemption plan.
 - Many believers would be shocked at that statement, thinking it all happened at the cross.
 - Clearly the most important part of God’s redemption plan is the cross; Jesus sacrificing Himself in our place, for our sins, That act alone makes our redemption possible.
 - No other part of God’s plan could be achieved without the cross being accomplished by Jesus.
 - When Jesus said “*It is finished*” He was talking about the payment for our debt of sin.
 - *Rom 8:23* clearly stated that we are still “*waiting...for the redemption of our bodies*”.
 - That should be obvious because these bodies still “*groan within ourselves*” from the curse of Adam’s original sin; they get sick, they quit working & finally they die.
 - Understanding our blessed hope requires us to know more about God’s redemption plan.

Here are some of those other parts of God’s redemption plan we’re still looking forward to:

The rapture, The beginning of Our Blessed Hope; Three things happen at the rapture:

- The resurrection of the righteous dead & their catching away, *1 Thes 4:16*
- Faithful living believers are caught up by Jesus, *1 Thes 4:17-18, Jn 14:1-3*
- All faithful believers, alive & dead, get their eternal bodies, *1Cor 15:51-53*

The Bema seat judgment:

- When we finally shed the last remnants of our fleshly life & this sinful world, *1Cor 3:11-15*

The seven year tribulation:

- Jesus opens the 7 sealed scroll & His process of reclaiming this world as His own begins: *Rev 5*
- The seven year tribulation, God’s wrath on the rebellious, sinful world, *Rev 6-19, Lk 20:9-16*

Wedding Supper of the Lamb: *Rev 19:7-9, Isa 61:10, Hosea 2:19-20, Ps 45:13-15*

- Faithful raptured believers celebrate their glorious marriage to Jesus as His bride.

Jesus returns to rule on earth for 1000 yrs: *Lk 1:32-33, 19:27, Isa 2:4, 11:1-10, 32:18*

- The long awaited earthly reign of the Messiah, Jesus, on earth where He rules in righteousness.

Great White Throne Judgment: *Rev 20:11-15*

- Judgment of all unbelievers, where they are cast into the lake of fire for eternity.

The heavens & earth are remade: *Rev 21:1, 2 Pet 3:7-14*

- The old, cursed by sin, heavens & earth are burned up & a new unblemished heaven & earth are recreated, (God’s creation born again?)

New Jerusalem comes down to earth & God lives forever with mankind: (*Rev 21:2-7*)

- Finally after seven thousand years of patiently working & waiting, God can live with His children on earth.

- God's plan of redemption, made before the foundation of the world won't be completed until He can once again walk with His children on a sinless earth like He did with Adam.
- The whole bible is the account of how God is working out His plan of redemption & it ends when the curse of sin removed from every part of God's creation.
- At that point our blessed hope will be finally realized in its fullness.
- God's plan to live forever with His children in paradise will finally be a reality.

Heb 6:19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast ...

- This unshakeable promise of a sinless eternal life with Jesus, reassures & anchors our soul, to always remain steadfast on Jesus. (our soul is our mind, will & emotions)
 - Is my Blessed Hope causing me to be "*Eagerly Waiting*" for the return of Jesus?
 - Or, Do I let the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches & the lust for other things choke out the word in my life; Am I too comfortable in this world?

° Paul instructed Titus about how believers should live while waiting for *our blessed hope*.

Titus 2:12–13 Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ ...

- Our blessed hope should remind us to keep our hearts free from the snares of this world, & turned toward Jesus & His kingdom to come.

° Jesus told a parable describing what happens to believers who's hearts are not set on Him.

Mt 25:1–13 The kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. ³Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, ⁴but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. ⁵But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. ⁶At midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' ⁷Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' ⁹But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.'

- This parable is about believers, & their readiness for the return of Jesus.
- This parable is about you & me living today; We are those virgins Jesus is talking about.
 - All ten were virgins, symbolic of believers; *Kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins*
 - All ten had lamps that were burning bright at one time; *Our lamps are going out*
- Sadly, all ten hadn't made the same choices while waiting for the groom's return.
- Some were diligent about preparing for His return & some were careless.
 - Are we waiting with our lamps burning; Is our light shining in this world?
 - Do we have enough oil; Do we continually fill our lamp from God's word?

¹⁰And while they went to buy, (more oil) the Bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with Him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

- Believers who are ready; those who are **eagerly waiting** for His return, get taken with Jesus.

Heb 9:28 To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

- Believers who spend their time preoccupied with the world are unaware of the master's plan
- Those believers who've made Jesus their treasure, those who have valued Him above this world will not be surprised but will have been **eagerly waiting** for that moment.

- Those foolish believers who didn't prepare, will be left behind to go into the tribulation.

¹¹Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' ¹²But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

- I'm sure that immediately after the rapture many Christians who are left behind will be on their knees begging for the door to be opened again, but it's too late.
- These foolish believers hadn't been filling their lamps & getting to know Him.
- Just because a person confesses Jesus as their savior, it doesn't mean they know Him yet.
- Jesus didn't know them because they didn't spend their time with Him.
 - Adam "knew" Eve & she bore their son, this is intimate knowledge of another person.
 - The Bible uses this human language to describe a deep & personal relationship.
 - Just because we've met someone, doesn't mean that we know them in a meaningful way.
- Like all relationships, when we meet Jesus & believe in Him we then need to spend time with Him, get to know Him, read His word & pray, fall in love with Jesus.
- Jesus is coming for a bride that's already centered her life around Him while waiting for Him.
 - A bride who's excited to be with Him, she reads & re-reads the love letters He's sent.
 - A bride who's so in love that she's made herself ready for His return; *Rev 19:7*.
- Why would Jesus come for a bride that's a complete stranger; or worse, for an unfaithful bride who's committed adultery by giving her affections to someone else?
 - *Jer 3:8* Tells us God divorced Israel because she committed adultery with the world.
 - **Jesus is not coming for an adulterous bride.**

¹³Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor hour which the Son of Man is coming.

- Watch for His return, Eagerly wait for Him, Get to know Him, Fall in love with Him.
- Jesus is coming as a thief in the night to those who are consumed with the cares of this life.

*1 Thes 5:1-3 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. ²For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. ³For when **they** say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon **them**, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And **they** shall not escape.*

- They are all those who are not eagerly waiting for Him; they will be surprised when He comes.

1 Thes 5:4-6 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

⁵You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

- To be His Bride requires us to make some decisions;
 - We have to willingly choose to give all our heart to Jesus & reject the lusts of this world.
 - We have to actively make our relationship with Him the most important thing in our life.
- In *Rev 3:20* Jesus made a wonderful promise to all believers:

Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

° The Bible ends with a promise directly from Jesus to all believers.

Rev 22:20 Surely I am coming quickly & John says Amen, Come Lord Jesus.

- Jesus **is** coming for His bride; Are we ready for Him? Is there oil in our lamp?

1 Jn 2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.